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USAID WILDLIFE ASIA COUNTER WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING DIGEST: SOUTHEAST ASIA AND CHINA, 2019

Issue III, September 2020

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USAID WILDLIFE ASIA

Counter Wildlife Trafficking Digest: Southeast Asia and China, 2019

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	ii
BACKGROUND.....	i
I INTRODUCTION.....	2
1.1 LEGAL AND POLITICAL SUCCESSES	3
1.2 SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE RESEARCH AND TRENDS	3
1.3 SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE CAMPAIGNS.....	4
2 PANGOLINS.....	5
2.1 SITUATION UPDATE	5
2.2 TRADE ROUTES.....	6
2.3 SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS.....	9
2.4 SUMMARY.....	12
3 TIGERS	14
3.1 SITUATION UPDATE	14
3.2 TRADE ROUTES.....	16
3.3 SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS.....	18
3.4 SUMMARY.....	22
4 ELEPHANTS	23
4.1 SITUATION UPDATE	23
4.2 TRADE ROUTES.....	25
4.3 SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS.....	28
4.4 SUMMARY.....	31
5 RHINOS	33
5.1 SITUATION UPDATE	33
5.2 TRADE ROUTES.....	35
5.3 SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS.....	38
5.4 SUMMARY.....	41
6 KEY SEIZURES	43
6.1 PANGOLIN SEIZURES.....	43
6.2 TIGER SEIZURES	45
6.3 ELEPHANT SEIZURES.....	46
6.4 RHINO SEIZURES	46
7 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	48
7.1 DISCUSSION.....	48
7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS.....	49
REFERENCES.....	52
ENDNOTES	57

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CoP	Conference of the Parties
CWT	Counter Wildlife Trafficking
DNP	Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, Thailand
DoFI	Department of Forest Inspection, Lao PDR
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ETIS	Elephant Trade Information System
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
IWT	Illegal Wildlife Trade
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SAR	Special Administrative Region
SBCC	Social and Behavior Change Communication
TWIX	Trade in Wildlife eXchange
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WAP	World Animal Protection
WiTIS	Wildlife Trade Information System
WJC	Wildlife Justice Commission
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature
ZSL	Zoological Society of London

BACKGROUND

USAID Wildlife Asia is a five-year, US\$24.5 million, regional counter wildlife trafficking (CWT) initiative addressing the trafficking of pangolins, tigers, elephants and rhinos in Southeast Asia and China. The USAID Wildlife Asia Activity works to address wildlife trafficking as a transnational crime. The project aims to reduce consumer demand for wildlife parts and products, strengthen law enforcement, enhance legal and political commitment and support regional collaboration to reduce wildlife crime in Southeast Asia, particularly Cambodia, China, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), Thailand, and Vietnam.

TRAFFIC is a leading non-governmental organization working globally on trade in wild animals and plants in the context of both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. TRAFFIC collaborated with USAID and many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) when researching and writing this report.

This report is the third in a series, which builds on the previous USAID digests, Counter Wildlife Trafficking Digest: Southeast Asia and China, 2017, and Counter Wildlife Trafficking Digest: Southeast Asia and China, 2018. This report covers the period January to December 2019 with a focus on pangolins, tigers, elephants, and rhinos, and highlights the key developments in legislation on conservation, outlines some of the innovative social and behavior change communication (SBCC) research projects and campaigns, and then explores the seizures made in 2019. USAID Wildlife Asia and TRAFFIC regularly collect and update documentation on the current state of wildlife trafficking of these species through a compilation of secondary sources to report on and analyze trends and changes in patterns of trade. This information provides an evidence base to support decision-making about priority interventions in policy, law enforcement, and consumer demand reduction.

SBCC covers the range of campaigns and the research that provides information on demand for illegal wildlife products, as well as reducing consumer demand for these goods. A wide range of remarkable SBCC projects have been implemented since the previous digest, with new collaborations between NGOs and the travel industry, and with government agencies taking an active role in reducing demand for wildlife products. This report highlights some of these SBCC campaigns along with the gaps remaining to be filled.

As with previous issues, this third issue of the digest is based on a compilation of documentation, news articles, and reports that are readily available in the English language. Unlike previous digests, some information is also drawn from translated documents held in TRAFFIC's Wildlife Trade Information System (WiTIS). Nevertheless, it is possible that some data are still missing; therefore, USAID Wildlife Asia does not assume the figures included provide a complete data set. The recommendations provided target not only USAID Wildlife Asia directly but also the broader counter wildlife trafficking community and include a focus on social behavior change, improved law enforcement, increased government commitment, political will, and effective regional coordination.

I INTRODUCTION

Many important developments in counter wildlife trafficking (CWT) have taken place since the 2018 USAID digest. These include ground-breaking national legislation, strengthening of international collaborations, as well as significant steps forward in understanding and preventing the illegal wildlife trade in Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam. Coupled with a series of high-profile seizures, these developments have moved the international community closer to understanding, tackling, and disrupting criminal syndicates and traffickers. This report highlights those collaborations and the legal and political progress for the protection of pangolin, tigers, elephants, and rhinos.

The benefits of collaboration across organizations are reflected here, as this report represents a partnership between USAID and TRAFFIC, and new opportunities for data sharing and collaboration across conservation NGOs. Data have been contributed to this report from the following organizations either directly to TRAFFIC or via one of the NGOs listed here. These are ADM Capital Foundation, C4ADS, Education for Nature Vietnam, Environmental Investigation Agency, Fauna and Flora International, Freeland, Panthera, Wildlife Conservation Nepal, Wildlife Conservation Society, Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand, Wildlife Justice Commission (WJC), Wildlife Protection Society of India, Wildlife Trust of India, WildTiger, WildTeam, the World Customs Organization, as well as TRAFFIC itself. The data provided has been entered into TRAFFIC's Wildlife Trade Information System (WiTIS), which is a centralized repository of wildlife trade data, comprising seizure records, market surveys, and actionable information to support the work of conservation organizations, researchers, law enforcement agencies, and others. Where possible and permitted by the contributing organizations, the data have been added to the [Wildlife Trade Portal](#). The Wildlife Trade Portal is an interactive tool that displays TRAFFIC's seizure and incident data and is the largest repository of open-source illegal wildlife trade data. These additions to the Portal mean that much of the data collected to develop this report is now available for others to download and use for their research.

Building collaborations between bodies working to prevent illegal wildlife crime is crucial. Wildlife crime activities are shifting from physical markets to online trade, resulting in increased use of smuggling via postal services, as well as a reduction of enforcement capacity in areas where conservation is funded by tourism.¹ In light of these challenging changes, collaboration between bodies working to reduce wildlife crime is vital to CWT activities in the future.

The number of seizures reported in this USAID digest is significantly higher than reported in previous issues, which is likely due to the inclusion of a broader range of information sources rather than an increase in the number of actual seizures. It must also be noted that despite the high number of contributors to the data for this report, there are likely to be many seizures that were not reported publicly and therefore were not captured in this analysis. Additionally, there are likely to be some biases in the data, for example a high number of seizures in a particular location may reflect a greater law enforcement capacity or data collection effort by an NGO, rather than a greater volume of illicit trade.

This report takes the following structure: first, the report provides an overview of progress in the legal and political regulation of wildlife trade in 2019, along with significant behavior change research, trends, and campaigns; next, it provides a situation update, patterns in trade route data, and 2019 seizures for pangolins, tigers, elephants, and rhinos; then, it presents significant seizures over the past year; and finally, the report discusses those findings and puts forward a range of recommendations. It is intended that this analysis will provide a helpful summary for individuals interested in recent developments in the illegal wildlife trade.

I.1 LEGAL AND POLITICAL SUCCESSES

Exciting legal changes took place in 2019, as the groundbreaking Wildlife Conservation and Protection Act B.E. 2562 (2019) took effect in Thailand.² This landmark piece of legislation included a new category for non-native, CITES-listed species as “controlled”, and significantly increased the maximum penalties for infractions involving species listed in the Act. It raised the maximum fine for trafficking from US\$1,226 to US\$30,656 and increased the maximum imprisonment term from four years to 15 years.² This represents a significant step forward in strengthening legislation vital to the enforcement and prevention of the wildlife trade, and it is hoped that this will encourage other countries in the region to follow suit.

Positive developments took place in Lao PDR also during 2019 including the Department of Forest Inspection (DoFI) signing a Memorandum of Understanding with WWF Lao PDR, which aims to increase cross-border collaboration and help strengthen law enforcement through training and meetings.³

In addition to these national successes, countries have reaffirmed their commitment to tackling the international trade in wildlife through regional collaboration. In March the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Member States met for a landmark meeting on illegal wildlife trade, where the Chiang Mai Statement of the ASEAN Ministers Responsible for CITES and Wildlife Enforcement on the Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) was adopted.⁴ This statement sets out the main commitments for Member States to reduce domestic wildlife markets and it represents a significant step forward in the support to international commitments regarding tackling wildlife crime.⁴

I.2 SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE RESEARCH AND TRENDS

Research is critical in identifying insights into the demand for illegal wildlife products, including the underlying motivations and perceived benefits and barriers, in order to design effective behavior change interventions. In 2019, research primarily informed interventions with consumers of illegal wildlife products in East and Southeast Asia, for example mobilizing social support and changing purchasing preferences.

In 2018, USAID published key findings of three studies on consumer demand for elephant, rhino, pangolin and tiger products in China, elephant and tiger products in Thailand, and elephant, rhino, and pangolin products in Vietnam. All three studies included a quantitative survey of consumers and a qualitative component comprising focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.^{5,6,7}

In addition to the research studies mentioned above, the behavior change “Community of Practice” (professionals from various backgrounds united by their stake, passion, mandate, or interest in applying behavioral science for conservation gain) could also receive guidance, coordination, and capacity building information in the Wildlife Consumer Behavior Change Toolkit available at www.changewildlifeconsumers.org. The website serves as a resource repository, coordination platform, and communication hub. Most notably, the launch of the Behavior Change for Conservation online course included dedicated materials to support impact evaluation and a decision tree tool to guide the selection of SBCC strategies. Other significant updates include a review of progress against the CITES Demand Reduction Resolution, which led to an agreement by Parties at the CITES Eighteenth Conference of the Parties (CoP) around the need for guidance to support implementation of the Resolution. Preparation of this guidance will form a focus for efforts during 2020-21 and engage Community of Practice members (including CITES Parties).

I.3 SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE CAMPAIGNS

A quick “traffic light” analysis in Table I below illustrates where the bulk of campaigns were delivered for each of the target taxa, reflecting consumption patterns. Green indicates five or more campaigns; amber between two and four campaigns; and red indicates one or no campaigns.

	China	Thailand	Vietnam	LaoPDR	Cambodia
Tigers	Green	Amber	Amber	Red	Red
Elephants	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Amber
Rhinos	Green	[limited/no demand]	Green	Red	[limited/no demand]
Pangolins	Green	[limited/no demand]	Amber	Red	Red

The Zoological Society of London (ZSL) conducted pangolin research in Guangdong Province, China, in collaboration with GlobeScan, and as part of European Union- and Defra-supported pangolin work in China and Thailand. ZSL conducted monitoring in the Western Forest Complex of Kanchanaburi province in Thailand,⁸ aiding law enforcement and running campaigns to raise awareness about pangolins among local communities. In addition, Freeland and Wild Act ran rhino horn demand reduction campaigns in Vietnam.

The following campaigns and communications were implemented during 2019:

Thailand

- Elephants are Like Us (British Embassy)
- Digital Deterrence Campaign (USAID Wildlife Asia and DNP)
- A Good Life is Free of Killing (USAID Wildlife Asia, WildAid and DNP)
- Beautiful Without Ivory (USAID Wildlife Asia and DNP)
- No to Ivory Souvenirs and Gifts (USAID Wildlife Asia and Anantara Hotels)
- Kung Fu Panda (WildAid)
- Travel Ivory Free (WWF, DNP, Thai Airways, Professional Tourist Guides Association of Thailand)
- No Ivory No Tiger Amulets (USAID Wildlife Asia and DNP, 2020)

Vietnam

- Rhino Horn is Not Medicine (HSI and CITES MA)
- If You Don't Buy, They Won't Die (Pan Nature)
- Chi Phase 3 (USAID Wildlife Asia and TRAFFIC), launched in December 2019
- Make Vietnam Proud, Say No to Ivory (UK embassy, TRAFFIC)

China

- Travel Ivory Free (WWF China, WWF HK)
- Reject Rhino Horn Products (WWF China)
- Souvenirs Could Be Contraband (WWF China, WildAid China, and China Customs)
- Reject Pangolin Products (WildAid, China Wildlife Conservation Association)
- Let Maternal Love Continue More Life (Pangolin) (WildAid China)
- Wildlife Protection Law Campaign (USAID Wildlife Asia and IFAW)



2 PANGOLINS

2.1 SITUATION UPDATE

CONSUMER DEMAND

TABLE 2. MOTIVATIONS FOR BUYING PANGOLIN PRODUCTS

PRODUCT	MOTIVATION	USE
Scales	Health	Perceived medicinal properties, such as to promote lactation and improve blood circulation
Meat	Status	Consumed for novelty, curiosity, and status, the latter through conspicuous consumption of a sought after and hard to acquire product ⁹

Pangolins are reported to be the world’s most heavily trafficked mammal,¹⁰ and they are poached for both domestic use and international trade.¹¹ Pangolin products include scales, meat, skins/leather, and pangolin wine.⁹ The motivations behind pangolin consumption are complex, including medical use and the prestige and novelty of consuming a unique and auspicious meat and a difficult to acquire valuable commodity.⁹ Scales (powdered or whole, sometimes carved) and meat are the most highly trafficked pangolin products in China and Vietnam, with demand driven in large part by the perceived health benefits. While pangolin products are valued for their alleged medicinal properties, people also believe that they can enhance the medicinal effects of other substances.^{5,6} Buyers are more likely to be male, between 35 and 55 years old, and with middle to high incomes.

POLICY

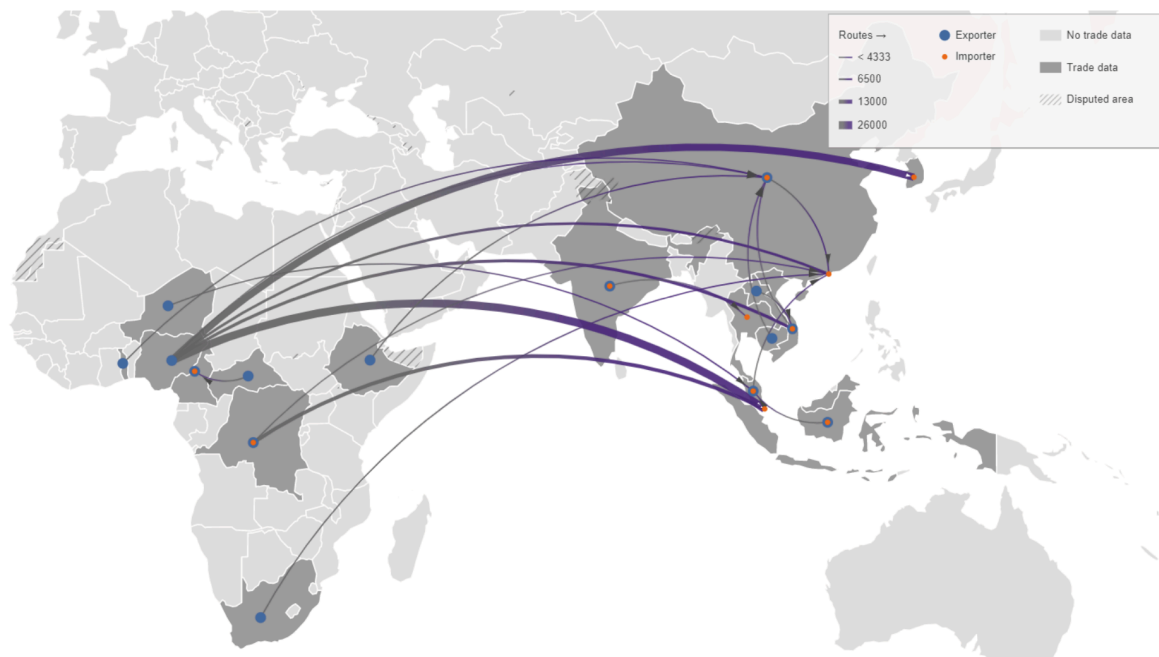
Since 1995 all pangolin species have been listed in Appendix II. However, in response to concerns about the sustainability of the pangolin trade, regulations were put in place at CITES CoP11 in 2000

when a zero annual export quota was established for the commercial trade of all four Asian pangolin species.¹² At CITES CoP17 in 2016, in response to the continued decline in pangolin populations, all Asian and African pangolin species were transferred from CITES Appendix II to I, meaning that international commercial trade in all pangolin species is only permitted in exceptional circumstances.¹³ Despite being listed in CITES Appendix I, the illegal trade of pangolins has continued. CITES Parties have experienced continued challenges with the control of seized pangolin scale stockpiles. At CITES Cop18 the issues of stockpile management were also recognized with the submission of a TRAFFIC guidance document on stockpile management by the Secretariat. The Standing Committee is expected to report its conclusions and recommendations at CITES CoP19 in 2022.¹⁴

LAW ENFORCEMENT

In 2019 there were 82 reported pangolin seizures in, or linked to, USAID Wildlife Asia’s focal countries, which involved a total of 155,795 kg of pangolin products, demonstrating high levels of trade in pangolins. Information on trade routes and patterns, prosecutions, and the top 20 seizures by volume can be found below.

2.2 TRADE ROUTES



Map I. Trade routes identified for pangolin seizures in 2019 as reported in TRAFFIC’s Wildlife Trade and Information System (WiTIS)

Lines are weighted by the amount seized in kg along these routes.

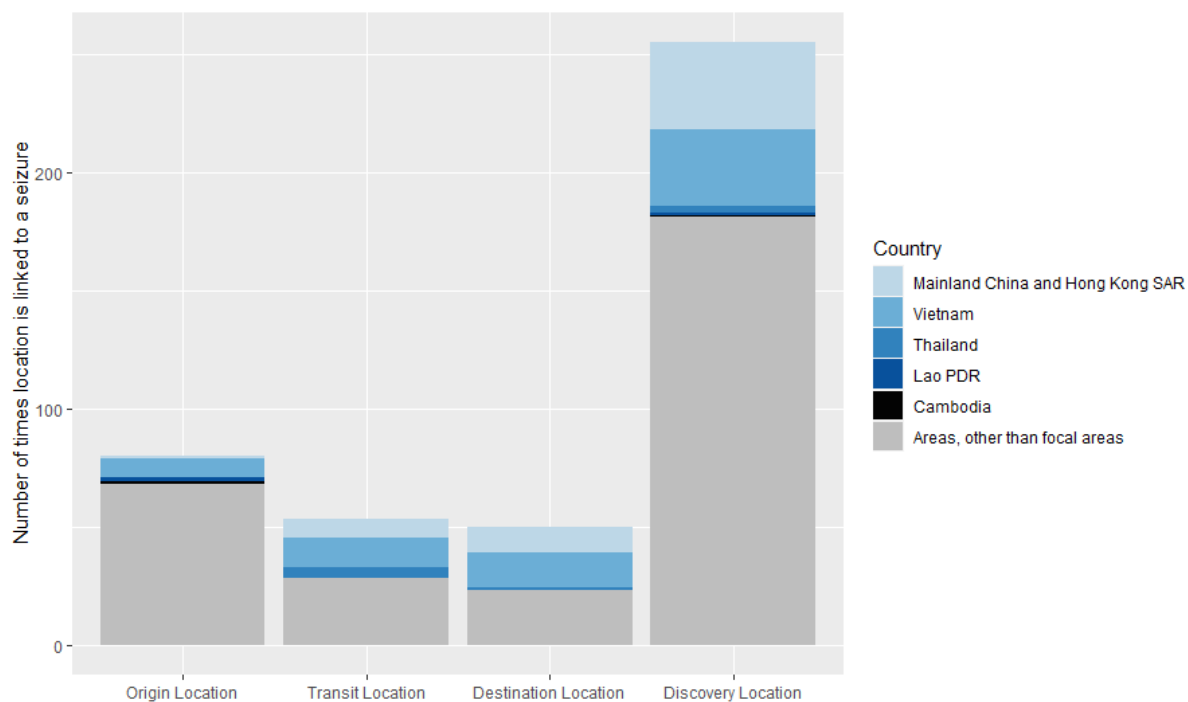


Figure 1. Pangolin seizure locations

A total of 82 pangolin seizures were recorded in WiTIS which were linked to the focal locations (China including Hong Kong SAR, Cambodia, Vietnam, Lao PDR, and Thailand) and other areas (outside countries of interest) in 2019. Locations can be linked as an origin, transit, destination, and/or discovery location.

Historically, Asian species made up the bulk of the reported trade (and trafficking) in pangolins, leading to alarming declines in pangolins across Indonesia, with Sumatra and Java playing an important role as source points for this illicit trade.¹⁵ The trafficking of pangolins through Asia continues to be a threat in 2019, as shown by the seizure of 29.8 tons of pangolins in Sabah in February 2019.¹⁶ In addition, since around 2008, evidence of trans-continental illegal trade in pangolins was detected, with animals being moved from Africa to Asia.¹¹ Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Cameroon have been identified as some of the main origin countries in seizures of illegally traded African pangolins.¹⁷ In these countries, pangolins are caught by rural people, who pass them on to local middlemen. The middlemen in turn sell them on to traders,¹¹ who then ship the pangolin products to end-use markets predominately in China and Vietnam.¹¹ For the Asian species of pangolin, India, Malaysia, and Nepal have been highlighted as sources in the illegal supply.¹¹ Despite being listed in CITES Appendix I, pangolin trafficking persists, as shown by the routes involving seized cargoes in Map I.¹¹ It is not possible to quantify the total volume of the illegal trade that has occurred since pangolins were listed in CITES Appendix I, but reports of seizures of eight tons of scales in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR), and 30 tons of pangolin products (including live and dead animals) in Malaysia (the biggest seizure in Malaysia’s history), both in 2019, suggest a high level of illegal trade of these species.^{18,19,20}

VIETNAM’S ROLE IN PANGOLIN TRAFFICKING NETWORKS

While China had the highest number of pangolin seizures out of the focal locations (37 seizures), Vietnam was the most commonly reported end destination for seized products (15 seizures), and the most commonly reported country acting as a transit point for the movement of pangolin seizures (12

seizures) (see Figure 1). The data may be biased towards countries that have higher enforcement capacity and are more effective, as well as those countries that make their seizures data easily accessible. These findings are significant as they suggest movement of pangolins both through and into Vietnam in 2019. This finding is supported by research from IUCN-SSC PSG, WildAid, and the Wildlife Justice Commission, which have previously highlighted Vietnam as being disproportionately involved in the illegal pangolin trade.^{5,11,21,22,23,24}

ETHIOPIA AS A KEY PART OF PANGOLIN TRAFFICKING NETWORKS

The analysis of 2019 seizure data revealed an illicit trading route of pangolins from Ethiopia to China. Challender *et al.* (2020)¹¹ identified Ethiopia's involvement in the pangolin trade, but that analysis showed that other African countries, including Nigeria, DRC, Cameroon, Uganda, and the Republic of the Congo, were much more prominent. Similarly, in the previous USAID digest, Cameroon, the Republic of the Congo, and Nigeria were identified as major exporters of pangolin in 2018, while Ethiopia was not mentioned.²¹ The prominence of the Ethiopia-China trading route (implicated in seven seizures) is therefore surprising and warrants follow-up research into whether this is an emerging trade route. Ethiopia has previously been identified as both a hub and an important source country for illegal wildlife trade activities, particularly the trade of illegal ivory.^{25,26} Of particular concern, research in 2017 on the perspectives of Ethiopian Customs staff at checkpoints in north-eastern Ethiopia suggested that for almost half of the staff interviewed, the wildlife trade was not seen as a strategic concern and that there was limited knowledge among staff of CITES regulations.²⁵

2.3 SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS

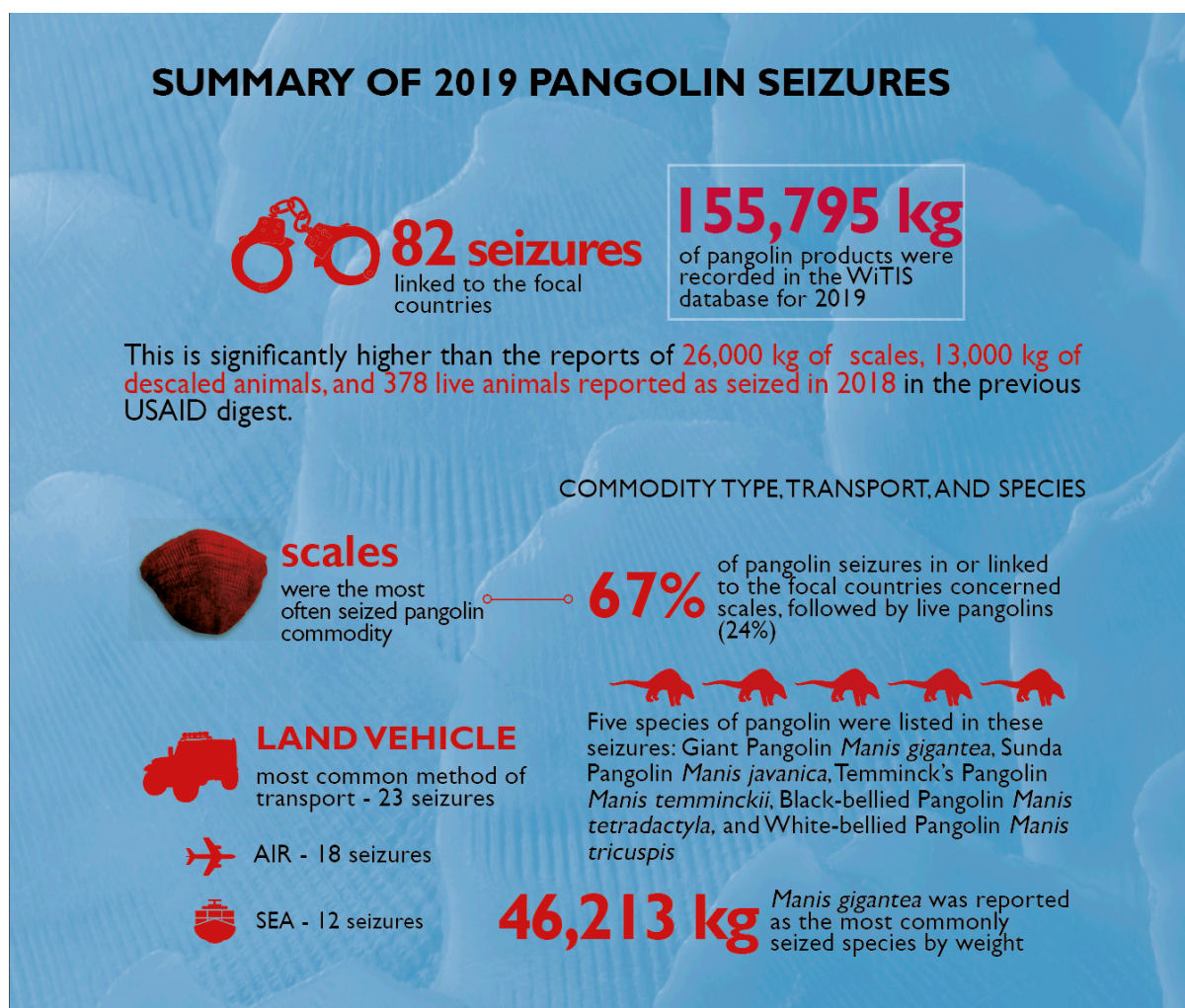


TABLE 3. TOP 20 PANGOLIN SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2019, RANKED BY VOLUME OF SEIZURE

NO.	DATE	LOCATION	SUMMARY	ITEMS SEIZED
1	Oct 2019	Mainland China	Wenzhou Customs Authorities seized a shipment of 23,000 kg of pangolin scales originating from Nigeria and transported via Busan (Republic of Korea) and Shanghai. The pangolin scales were found concealed among slices of ginger within the containers. A total of 18 suspects were arrested in connection (Asia One, 2019).	<i>Manis</i> – scales – 23,000 kg

2	Apr 3	Singapore	A container labelled as “frozen beef” coming from Nigeria and destined for Vietnam was seized at the Pasir Panjang Export Stations. A total of 117 kg of ivory and 12,900 kg of pangolin scales from four species were found concealed among the frozen beef (Reuters, 2019; Channel News Asia, 2019).*	<i>Manis gigantea</i> - scales <i>Manis temminckii</i> - scales <i>Manis tetradactyla</i> - scales <i>Manis tricuspis</i> - scales Total weight = 12,900 kg Elephantidae – worked ivory and ivory pieces (raw) – 177 kg
3	Apr 8	Singapore	Singapore Customs seized a second significant shipment of 12,700 kg of pangolin scales. The goods were found in a 40-ft container that had been declared as “cassia seeds”. The shipment had been exported from Nigeria and was destined for Vietnam (Today, 2019).	<i>Manis gigantea</i> – scales <i>Manis tricuspis</i> – scales Total weight = 12,700 kg
4	Jul 21	Singapore	Three containers declared as “timber” shipped from the Democratic Republic of Congo and destined for Vietnam contained 11,900 kg of pangolin scales and 8,800 kg of African elephant ivory, estimated to be worth US\$48.4 million (National Parks, 2019).*	<i>Manis gigantea</i> – scales – 11,900 kg <i>Loxodonta africana</i> – ivory pieces (raw) – 8,800 kg
5	Mar 25	Vietnam	Hai Phong Customs inspected a suspicious container that had arrived at Hai Phong Port from Africa on the Mia Schulte ship, addressed to a recipient in Hanoi. A total of 8,300 kg of pangolin scales were found concealed in the container among sacks of siamea seed (Haiquan Online, 2019d).	<i>Manis</i> – scales – 8,300 kg
6	Jan 16	Hong Kong SAR	Hong Kong Customs seized a shipment from Nigeria (valued at US\$7.9 million) containing 8,300 kg of pangolin scales and 2,100 kg of ivory from a container declared to contain “frozen beef”, destined for either China or Vietnam. Two employees of a trading company in Mong Kok were detained in connection (Hong Kong Customs, 2019c; Africa Sustainable Conservation News, 2019; BBC, 2019).*	<i>Manis</i> – scales – 8,300 kg Elephantidae – tusk – 2,100 kg
7	May 23	Vietnam	Customs officials at Cai Mep International Port, Vung Tau, seized 5,264 kg of pangolin scales concealed in a container among sacks of cashew nuts arriving from the Port of Lagos, Nigeria (Haiquan Online, 2019f).	<i>Manis gigantea</i> – scales <i>Manis tetradactyla</i> – scales <i>Manis tricuspis</i> – scales Total weight = 5,264 kg

8	Apr 12	Vietnam	A container transported by the Kota Johan ship travelling from the Democratic Republic of Congo was stopped at Nam Hai Dinh Vu Port, Hai Phong, declared as “drum plastic resin”. Inside the plastic drums customs officials seized 3,978 kg of African elephant ivory and 3,448.5 kg of giant pangolin scales (Haiquan Online, 2019e).*	<i>Manis gigantea</i> – scales – 3,448.5 kg <i>Loxodonta</i> – ivory pieces (raw) – 3,978 kg
9	Dec 10	Vietnam	Three containers addressed to a recipient in Hanoi were inspected at Hai Phong Port after being transported from Nigeria via Quy Nhon Port, Binh Dinh. The container was declared as “Douisse wood” and 1,700 kg of pangolin scales in addition to 330 kg raw ivory were found concealed among the wood (Haiquan Online, 2019f).*	<i>Manis</i> – scales – 1,700 kg Elephantidae – ivory pieces (raw) – 330 kg
10	Nov 2019	Nigeria	A shipment of 1,530 kg of pangolin scales destined for China was seized from containers declared as “agricultural sprayers and shale” at Port Harcourt International Airport. The pangolin scales were found inside wooden pallets had been concealed among tins of mackerel and tomato paste (The Guardian, 2019).	<i>Manis</i> – scales – 1,530 kg
11	Jan 25	Vietnam	A shipment arriving from Lagos declared to contain wood was screened at Dinh Vu Port, Hai Phong and inside the container authorities found 1,500 kg of pangolin scales and 500 kg of ivory concealed inside wooden crates under layers of wood. The recipient of the goods was identified as VIC Thanh Binh Import-Export Co. located in Hanoi. The container had been declared to contain wood. (Customs News, 2019).*	<i>Manis</i> – scales – 1,500 kg Elephantidae – ivory pieces (raw) – 500 kg
12	Jan 30	Vietnam	A second shipment registered to recipient VIC Thanh Binh Import-Export Co. was seized at Hai Phong Port arriving from Lagos, Nigeria. An estimated 100 kg of ivory and 1,400 kg of pangolin scales were found concealed inside wooden crates within the container (Haiquan Online, 2019g).*	<i>Manis</i> – scales – 1,400 kg Elephantidae – tusk – 20 (100 kg)
13	Jan 16	Vietnam	Ha Tinh Provincial Police seized 215 pangolins weighing total of 630 kg from a residence in Huong Son, Ha Tinh Province. A total of nine suspects were arrested (CPV, 2019).	<i>Manis</i> – individual – 215 (603.6 kg) Elephantidae – worked ivory – one (1 kg)

14	Jan 31	Uganda	Containers transported by trucks from the Democratic Republic of Congo via South Sudan were seized in Kampala. Inside the containers 424 kg of pangolin scales and 3,000 kg of elephant tusks were found covered in wax and concealed inside hollowed out logs. Two Vietnamese nationals involved in a racket smuggling wildlife to Vietnam were detained (Al Jazeera, 2019; Journal du Cameroun, 2019).*	<i>Manis</i> – scales – 424 kg Elephantidae – Ivory pieces (raw) – 762 (3,000 kg)
15	May 31	Vietnam	Authorities detained the driver of a bus hired to transport 147 animals, including pangolins and reptiles, to Diem Chau District in Quang Ninh Province (Công lý, 2019).	<i>Manis</i> – individual Total number of animals seized = 147
16	Jul 26	Vietnam	Two suspects hired to transport 30 live pangolins from Lao PDR to Tay Son Town by bus were detained in Ha Tinh Province (Ha Tinh Police, 2019a).	<i>Manis</i> – live – 30 (140 kg)
17	Apr 16	Vietnam	A van travelling along the Hanoi-Hai Phong Expressway was stopped near Hai Phong city and the driver escaped. Police seized 39 live Sunda pangolins and fake license plates (Hung Yen Police, 2019b).	<i>Manis javanica</i> –live – 39 (136 kg)
18	Feb 25	India	Customs officials in Chennai seized 111 kg of pangolin scales, among other wildlife products, destined for transport through Mumbai for export to China. Two suspects were detained and claimed that some of the marine products had been sourced from Rameswaram, Chennai (Times of India, 2019).	<i>Manis</i> – scales – 111 kg
19	Nov 28	Mainland China	A vehicle travelling from Pingxiang to Nanning was inspected at the Pingxiang border checkpoint and authorities seized 75 kg of pangolin scales (China News, 2019b).	<i>Manis</i> – scales – 75 kg
20	Jan 2019	Mainland China	The border inspection station of Mangyan in Lujiang intercepted two parcels transported by an express delivery truck bound for Kunming containing 63.5 kg of pangolin scales (Yunnan Net, 2019).	<i>Manis</i> – scales – 63.5 kg

* Seizures included in multiple tables

2.4 SUMMARY

Eight species of pangolin have been assessed by the IUCN Red List, all of which are classified as vulnerable, endangered, or critically endangered,²⁷ and all are listed in CITES Appendix I.²⁸

In 2019, there were 82 reported pangolin seizures, which were seized in, or linked to, the focal countries, and which involved a total of 155,795 kg of pangolin products, demonstrating there remains persistently high levels of trade in pangolins. This is significantly higher than the 26,000 kg of scales,

13,000 descaled animals, and 378 live animals reported as seized in the 2018 issue of the digest. However, this is at least partly due to the greater number of data sources for this 2019 issue.

Ethiopia to China appeared to be an increasingly used trafficking route for pangolin in 2019, which is important as this was not previously recognized as a common route for the trade and should be researched further to determine if this is an emerging trade route. Vietnam was the most commonly reported end destination for seized products (reported in 15 seizures).



3 TIGERS

3.1 SITUATION UPDATE

CONSUMER DEMAND

New research in 2019 has helped expand understanding of tiger demand and types of consumption in the region, including studies by TRAFFIC in Vietnam and World Animal Protection (WAP) in China and Vietnam.²⁹

The WAP study involved 1,200 interviews in eight different Chinese cities. More than 40 percent of interviewees reported having used or purchased drugs and health products containing big cat ingredients (from tigers and lions). Consumers were generally older, with mid-level incomes, and were less well educated than average. Relating specifically to tiger products, significant variations were found in the use of tiger products between social groups. In Vietnam, a gender difference was found in the type of tiger product consumed. Men were more likely to buy tiger bone wine, and retired women more likely to buy tiger plasters.²⁹ In Vietnam, tiger products are often bought as gifts for superiors or elders as a sign of honor and respect. Gifting is especially prevalent among affluent businessmen.

According to the TRAFFIC study in Vietnam, 5.8 percent of the urban sample of 1,120 people interviewed in Hanoi and Hoh Chi Minh City reported having ever bought or used tiger products, and 28 percent have bought or used tiger products in the past year. An important motivator for using tiger products is the perceived ability to address a range of ailments, mainly bone or joint pain such as arthritis and fractures.²⁹ Seventy-one percent of users had consumed their last-used tiger product for medicinal purposes, while 6 percent wore tiger claws or teeth because of spiritual beliefs, to ward-off evil spirits, or to protect children. The majority of users (83 percent) said they had used tiger bone glue (or “cao” in Vietnamese). Of these users, 38 percent were aged 45–59 and 31 percent were aged 60 or over.³⁰

TABLE 4. MOTIVATIONS FOR BUYING TIGER PRODUCTS

PRODUCT	MOTIVATION	USE
Bones	Health	Treatments for illness and tonics promoting wellness ³⁰
Blood	Health	Tonics promoting wellness ³⁰
Teeth, skulls, skins claws	Spiritual	Good fortune and Protection from evil spirits ³⁰
Skin	Social	Decorative item as rugs or on walls
Cubs	Social	High value, novelty pets
Meat	Social	Consumed as a high-value novelty
Tiger bone wine	Social	Given as a high-status gift

Several initiatives launched in 2019 were aimed at reducing the consumption of tiger products. In Thailand, USAID Wildlife Asia supported the campaign “A Good Life is Free of Killing”, which brought together three prominent Thai nationals, including an actor and a spiritual leader, to campaign against the use and sale of tiger and ivory products for spiritual reasons.³¹ A second campaign by WildAid and the Zoological Park Association in Thailand took a different approach by using Kung Fu Panda, a popular cartoon character, as a champion to urge people to protect wildlife (including tigers).³²

In addition to these initiatives, WWF Cambodia ran a Global Tiger Day campaign across Cambodia in collaboration with local NGOs and policy makers, which aimed to raise awareness about the dangers of snares, the detrimental impacts of consuming wildlife products, and how tigers can benefit people and the environment.³³ This campaign was part of a longer-term project by WWF to reintroduce wild tigers into Cambodia.

POLICY

All sub-species of tigers have been listed in CITES Appendix I since 1975, except the Siberian tiger (*P.t. altaica*), which was transferred from CITES Appendix II to I in the mid-1980s.³⁴ The need to regulate the captive breeding of big cats, including tigers has been raised at multiple CITES meetings. At CITES CoP15 in 2010, Parties adopted a decision (Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP15) that breeding tigers for parts or derivatives should not be permitted. However, at CITES CoP18 in 2019, countries with Asian big cat breeding facilities were instructed to review their national management practices, and those with commercial tiger breeding facilities were to restrict captive tiger populations to levels which support wild populations (Resolution Conf. 12.5 (Rev. CoP18)).^{35,36,37}

LAW ENFORCEMENT

In 2019 there were 34 reported seizures of tiger products, which occurred in or were linked to the focal countries. These seizures involved a total of 552 kg of tiger products. Information on trade routes and patterns, prosecutions, and the top 20 seizures ranked by volume can be found below.

3.2 TRADE ROUTES

For wild tigers the majority of illegal trade appears to follow two primary routes: 1) from the Russian Federation into China, or 2) from South Asia into China and Vietnam.³⁵ The trafficking of wild tiger products from the Russian Federation has been most commonly detected in Eastern Russia and along the China-Russia border involving both Russian and Chinese nationals.³⁵ The South Asia trafficking route involves smuggling wild tigers primarily from India, but also from Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal into China and Vietnam. Wild tigers are also taken from Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand.³⁵

For captive tigers, a Greater Mekong Region trafficking route has been identified in the literature. Most of these tigers are traded from Thailand into Lao PDR, Vietnam, and China, and from Lao PDR into China.^{35,34} Tiger farms in Vietnam and China also supply products from captive tigers to domestic consumers.³⁸ North Korea has emerged as a major source of tiger bone wine, which is believed to come from captive tigers. Other countries, such as South Africa, have also been implicated in tiger trafficking.^{34,34} Recent reports highlight concerns about the leakage of captive tigers across multiple countries into the illegal tiger trade, as well as the continued impacts of the trade on wild populations.^{34,39}



Map 2. Trade routes identified for tiger seizures in 2019 as reported in WiTIS

Lines are weighted by the amount seized in kg along these routes.

Map 2 shows implicated trade routes from the 2019 seizure data, which differs from trade routes reported in previous years. This could reflect less activity along the Russian Federation and South Asia routes to China in 2019, or it may be due to gaps in seizure data records. A significant proportion of the reported seizures in 2019 involved a smuggling route from Vietnam to China, reflecting another known route. A small number of seized tiger products were being smuggled from South Africa to China, which is concerning given previous indications that tiger products have been laundered through the legal lion trade from South Africa.

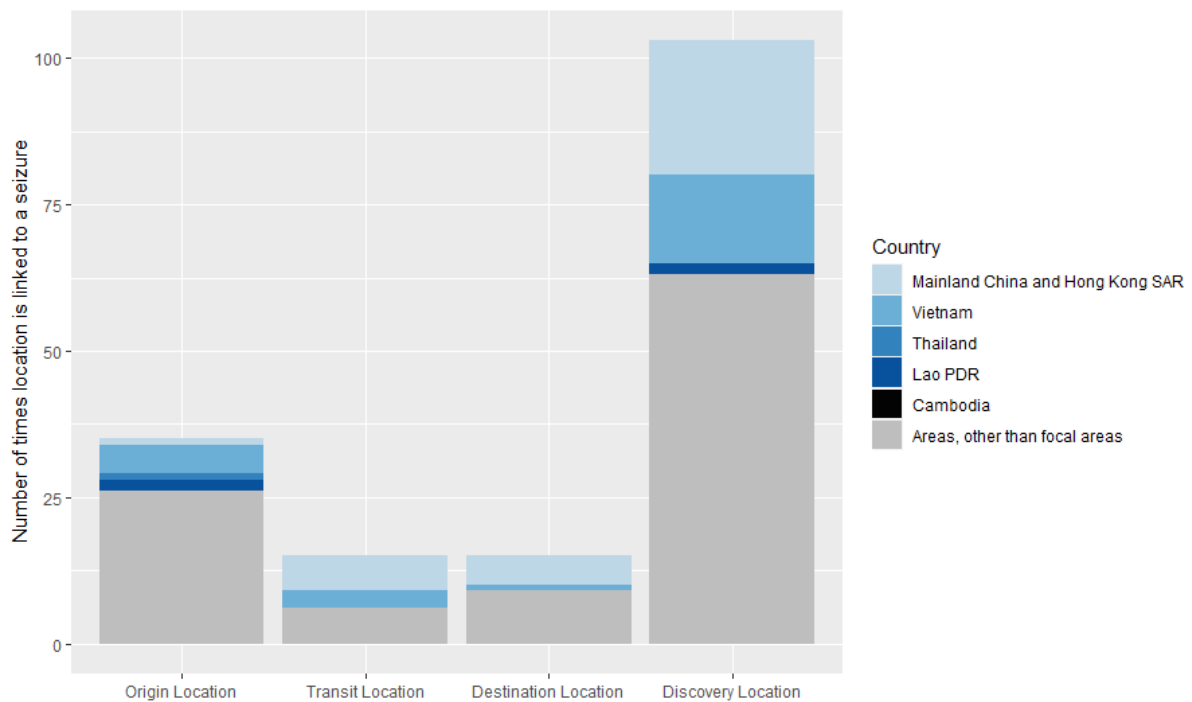


Figure 2. Tiger seizure locations

A total of 34 tiger seizures were recorded in WiTIS, which were linked to the focal locations (China including Hong Kong SAR, Cambodia, Vietnam, Lao PDR, and Thailand) and other areas (outside countries of interest) in 2019. Locations can be linked as an origin, transit, destination, and/or discovery location.

VIETNAM TO CHINA AS A KEY TRAFFICKING ROUTE OF TIGER PRODUCTS

Vietnam is an important part of the tiger trafficking route to China, having been implicated in four reported seizures in 2019. This is strongly supported by findings from previous research.³⁴ Vietnam does not have a wild breeding population of tigers, which were driven to extinction by overhunting.³⁸ Therefore, many of the tiger products consumed in and exported from Vietnam are likely to be from tigers bred in Vietnam or other countries such as Lao PDR,³⁴ or from wild tigers in other countries.

TIGER PRODUCTS TRAFFICKED FROM SOUTH AFRICA TO HONG KONG SAR

Two incidents in 2019 involved tiger bone products being trafficked from South Africa to Hong Kong SAR. Even though this number is low, the finding is troubling combined with previous research showing that captive tigers have been euthanized and their parts smuggled from South Africa to Asia.^{34,40} In addition, a large seizure of 280 lion bones in Cambodia in December 2019 was believed to have come from South Africa.⁴¹ South Africa is a legal exporter of large quantities of African lion bones, and there are worries that the legal lion bone trade is used to launder tiger products.⁴⁰ Demand for tiger bones and bone substitutes could be putting pressure on wild lion populations.^{40,42} While little direct evidence exists showing that the demand for lion bones in Asia is currently a threat to wild lion populations, the demand in Asia for tonics and medicine made from lion products (where they are often sold as substitutes for tiger products) has increased. There has been an increased interest

reported by Asian nationals in lion bones across Eastern and Southern Africa, further raising conservation concerns and underscoring the need to closely monitor the lion bone trade.⁴²

3.3 SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS

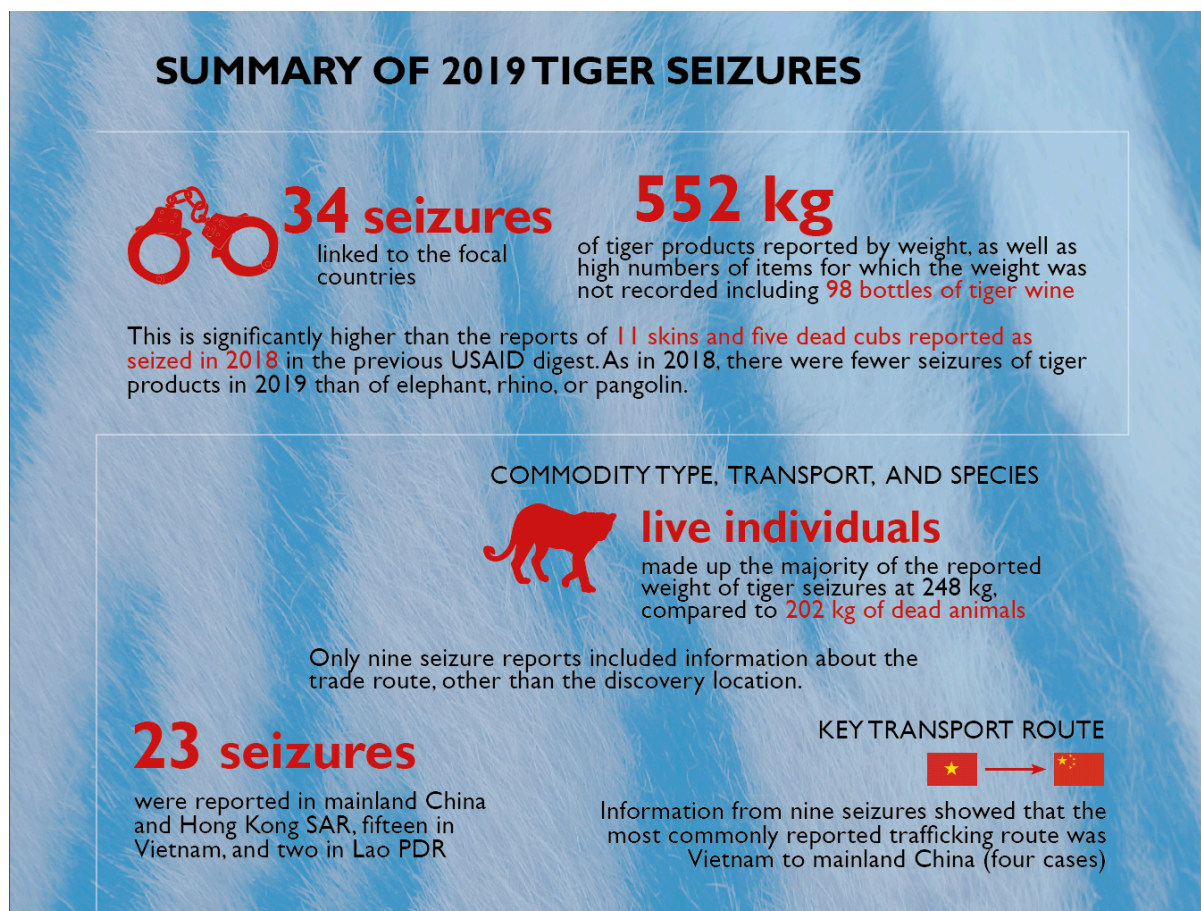


TABLE 5. TOP 20 TIGER SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2019, RANKED BY VOLUME OF SEIZURE

NO.	DATE	LOCATION	SUMMARY	ITEMS SEIZED
1	Sep 14	Vietnam	Environment Police detained two suspects in Cam Pha, the largest city in Quang Ninh province, in possession of a live tiger in a truck coming from Nghe An province and destined for Cam Pha. A residence was later searched, and authorities confiscated two tiger skeletons, 12 skulls, three skins and equipment used to make bone glue. Two suspects were detained (Nhan Dan, 2019).	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – live – one (240 kg) <i>Panthera tigris</i> – skeleton – two <i>Panthera tigris</i> – skulls – 12 <i>Panthera tigris</i> – skins - three
2	May 14	Vietnam	Police conducted a raid on a house in Thai Nguyen city and seized many wildlife products including a frozen tiger (200 kg) and 50 kg of tiger body parts, suspected to make bone glue. One suspect was detained	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – bodies – one (200 kg) <i>Panthera tigris</i> – body parts – 50 kg (unidentified body)

			(Baomoi, 2019).	parts)
3	Apr 2019	Mainland China	In Nanning, the capital of Guangxi province which abuts Vietnam, 31.15 kg of tiger bone, along with 78,528 seahorses, sea cucumber, and 2.13 kg of ivory was seized. Three members of a gang operating along the Sino-Vietnamese border were detained (Sohu, 2019a).	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – bone – 31.15 kg Elephantidae – worked ivory – 2.13 kg
4	Apr 2	Mainland China	An operation conducted in Qingdao and Nanning resulted in the arrest of 15 suspects and seizure of 10.9 kg of tiger bone, four pieces of tiger skin, eight tiger teeth, among other wildlife products. The gang was using WeChat to coordinate trafficking of animals between Vietnam and China (dzwww.com, 2019).*	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – bone – 10.9 kg <i>Panthera tigris</i> – teeth – eight (0.14 kg) <i>Panthera tigris</i> – skin pieces – four Rhinocerotidae – horn – 1.83 kg Elephantidae – worked ivory – 21.6 kg Manidae – scales – 24.73 kg
5	Nov 18	Vietnam	Police in Ha Tinh province intercepted two suspects that were transporting two tiger cubs (8 kg) by motorbike. Authorities decided to check the vehicle and discovered two live tiger cubs concealed in a box. The two suspects fled the scene (Cong An Tinh Ha Tinh Province, 2019).	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – live – two juveniles (8 kg)
6	Mar 22	Vietnam	Two tiger cub carcasses (1.7 kg) were seized in Nghe An province after a trader advertised them for sale on Facebook, suspected to have been for the purpose of making tiger bone wine (WildOpenEye, 2019).	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – bodies – two cubs (1.7 kg)
7	May 4	Mainland China	Customs officers at Dandong Customs Railway Travel Inspection Site inspected the luggage carried by an inbound passenger. The image of the luggage was abnormal. A total of 96 tiger wine bottles were seized (Sina, 2019a).	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – wine – 96 bottles
8	May 30	Vietnam	Environment Police in Binh Duong, immediately north of Ho Chi Minh City, seized 56 tiger skin products in addition to claws and teeth. One suspect was prosecuted for selling products from tigers, bears, and elephants on social media (ENV, 2019).	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – skin leather product – 56 <i>Panthera tigris</i> – claw <i>Panthera tigris</i> – teeth

9	Dec 12	Mainland China	Police in Suifenhe, Heilongjiang Province arrested two suspects found to be in possession of 26 tiger bones, 214 brown bear paws, 19 animal teeth, 10 bear gall bladders, five deer antlers, four antelope horns, and 213 kg of sea cucumbers (Sina, 2019b).	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – bone – 26
10	Sep 12	Vietnam	Police in Binh Dinh seized 15 tiger claws, four raw ivory pieces, three wild pig tusks, 30 ivory rings, and an ivory bracelet from a suspect's residence. Investigations began in March 2019 when authorities discovered wildlife products for sale on social media (ENV, 2020).	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – claw – 15 Elephantidae – worked ivory – four (pendants) Elephantidae – worked ivory – 30 (rings) Elephantidae – worked ivory – one (bracelet) Elephantidae – raw ivory - four
11	Jul 23	Vietnam	Seven frozen tiger carcasses were seized from a parked vehicle in Hanoi. Two suspects and the alleged kingpin were detained and convicted to 16 years in total for smuggling tigers into Vietnam from Lao PDR (VN Express, 2019).	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – bodies – seven (juveniles)
12	Jan 8	Vietnam	Police in Hanoi seized five frozen tiger cubs from a guest house. The suspect detained was from Thanh Hoa province and found to have connections in Thailand (ENV, 2019).	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – bodies – five (juveniles)
13	Apr 4	Mainland China	Qingdao Customs investigated a suspect for smuggling wildlife products and seized a total of four tiger skins and 27 ivory products. Preliminary investigations found that the suspect had been trafficking animal products in Southeast Asia through postal channels (dzwww.com, 2019).	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – skin – four Elephantidae – worked ivory – 27
14	Mar 27	Mainland China	Three suspects were arrested by police in Guangxi province for sending wildlife commodities via the Pingxiang City Express Company to Beijing. Seized from the postal parcels were three tiger skins, three lion genitalia, 20.09 kg of pangolins, six dead geckos, one rhino horn product and powder, and three lion paws (Sina, 2019c).	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – skin – three Manidae – individuals – 20.09 kg Rhinocerotidae – horn - 1

15	Jan 15	Mainland China	A storage warehouse in Jinghong, Xishuangbanna was raided by the Criminal Investigation Brigade and they confiscated 1.15 kg of tiger bones, two tiger claws, and rhino and elephant ivory products. The suspect had purchased the goods from Fujian Province to sell on WeChat. A total of three suspects were arrested in connection with the case (Xinhuanet, 2019a).	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – bone – 1.15 kg <i>Panthera tigris</i> – claw – two (1.4 kg) Rhinocerotidae – carvings (pendants) - 29 (0.30 kg) Rhinocerotidae – carvings (necklace) – one (0.05 kg) Elephantidae – worked ivory – 39 (1.4 kg)
16	Apr 23	Vietnam	In June 2019, the Tu Son District Court in Bac Ninh province convicted a suspect to 18 months in prison for illegally trading and transporting two frozen tiger cubs. The suspect was apprehended on the April 23, 2019 in Tu Son Town in possession of the tiger carcasses which had been advertised for sale on Facebook (Dai Bieu Nhan Dan, 2019).	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – bodies – two juveniles
17	Jan 29	Vietnam	Huu Lung district authorities seized two tiger trophies from a temple in Lang Son province. The trophies were reportedly kept at the temple for religious purposes (ENV, 2019).	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – trophies - two
18	Mar 6	Mainland China	Seizures in Lhasa and Zhengzhou resulted in the confiscation of two tiger skins and other illegal wildlife products. The suspects would smuggle goods across the Sino-Vietnamese border to Henan from where goods would be sent via domestic transport and post to Qinghai, Tibet, and other locations in China to be sold (GX News, 2019).*	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – skins – two Elephantidae – worked ivory – 29.585 kg
19	May 13	Mainland China	Two Bengal tiger skins were seized in Lankao County and three suspects detained. The skins had been purchased on WeChat and smuggled from Vietnam and transported within China via the postal service (Sina, 2019d).	<i>Panthera tigris tigris</i> – skin – two
20	Nov 18	Vietnam	Police in Ha Tinh province intercepted two suspects that were transporting two tiger cubs (8 kg) by motorbike. Authorities decided to check the vehicle and discovered two live tiger cubs concealed in a box. The two suspects fled the scene (Cong An Tinh Ha Tinh province, 2019).	<i>Panthera tigris</i> – live – two 8 kg juveniles

* Seizures included in multiple tables

3.4 SUMMARY

Wild tiger populations are found in less than six percent of their historical range.⁴³ They are threatened by both habitat loss and fragmentation, and they face serious pressure from illegal poaching for products including skins, teeth, and bones for tiger bone wine and bone glue.^{34,36,38,44} The high level of smuggling is illustrated by the large volume of tigers and tiger products seized: between 2000 and 2018 the equivalent of 2,359 tigers was seized.³⁴ The 2019 seizures in the five target countries involved a total of 552 kg of tiger products, as well as high numbers of items for which the weight was not recorded, including 98 bottles of tiger wine. This is significantly higher than the 11 skins and five dead cubs reported seized in the 2018 CWT digest.²¹ This difference is likely due in part to the greater number of data sources for this 2019 digest. As in previous years, there were fewer tiger seizures in 2019 than elephant, rhino, or pangolin seizures.

One of the key findings is the importance of Vietnam in the illegal tiger trade and as part of the trafficking route to China. A small number of incidents in 2019 involved tiger bone products trafficked from South Africa to Hong Kong SAR. This finding is troubling given as it provides further evidence for an illegal South Africa to Asia link for the trade of big cats, supporting previous work which highlighted concerns about captive tigers being euthanized and their parts smuggled from South Africa to Asia.

Seizures represent only part of the trade, so the actual volume is likely higher. Due to a significant portion of the illegal trade in tiger products being sourced from captive populations³⁴ restrictions have been adopted by CITES Parties to ban commercial breeding of big cats for their parts. For example, evidence from investigations such as Operation Trophy in 2018, which was launched by authorities in the Czech Republic, has shown a clear link between private captive tiger breeding facilities in the Czech Republic and ethnic Vietnamese criminal gangs who process and smuggle tiger products to overseas buyers.⁴⁵



4 ELEPHANTS

4.1 SITUATION UPDATE

CONSUMER DEMAND

Ivory and elephant tail hair are the most commonly bought elephant products, since they are perceived to be beautiful and are a symbol of wealth and power.⁵ Given the high value of ivory, buyers have significantly higher than average incomes.

TABLE 6. MOTIVATIONS FOR BUYING ELEPHANT PRODUCTS

PRODUCT	MOTIVATION	USE
Household display	Social	Statues, figurines, ivory paneling in larger ornate displays or furniture pieces
Personal adornment	Social	Earrings, bangles, and necklaces (often bought overseas), necklace pendants, and rings/inlays
Spiritual beliefs/protection	Spiritual	Religious iconography, small buddhas for household display or for wearing as amulets on the body
Art/auction/collection	Social	Carved/worked ivory as collectors' items
Chopsticks	Social/spiritual	Chopsticks are often given as wedding gifts, and are believed to "purify" food before eating

The “Travel Ivory Free” campaign was conducted by WWF China during October 2019. This campaign collaborated with industry partners like Trip Advisor, CTrip, QYER, as well as social media influencers, celebrities, and travel bloggers. The social media part of this campaign reached approximately 70 million views across popular tourism destinations like Thailand, Vietnam, Japan, and Hong Kong SAR, engaging viewers across multiple platforms including Weibo, Facebook, and Instagram. According to WWF pre- and post-campaign evaluation on social media, the positive sentiment towards the ivory ban and elephant conservation was 33 percent higher after the campaign than before the campaign. In addition to the social media aspect of the “Travel Ivory Free 2019” campaign, the campaign also worked with the Thailand Department of National Parks, Professional Tour Guide Association of Thailand, Tourism Authority of Thailand, Thai Airways International, and LH Mall & Hotel Co.⁴⁶ This initiative provided training for Thai tourism guides and quantitative research focused on tourists from China who reported that they had purchased ivory while on trips abroad.⁴⁷

USAID Wildlife Asia played an important role in launching behavior change campaigns in Thailand in 2019, with campaigns like “A Good Life is Free of Killing”, which brought together a religious leader to speak out against the trade in ivory and tiger products and parts.³¹ Also in Thailand, the “Beautiful Without Ivory” campaign⁴⁸ engaged five popular fashion influencers to speak out against buying ivory. This was also a significant year for collaborations between in-country partners and international embassies to address ivory demand. Starting in January, the British embassy launched the “#ElephantsAreLikeUs” campaign, which hosted a competition for people to post photos of elephants showing behaviors similar to humans. This campaign was highly successful with uptake from celebrities and social media personalities.⁴⁹

The British embassy also collaborated with TRAFFIC in Vietnam with an online campaign with the slogan “Make Vietnam Proud, Say No to Ivory”. In a campaign centered around images of top Vietnamese footballers, Vietnamese citizens were encouraged to show national pride by rejecting ivory.⁵⁰ In Lao PDR, 30 tour guides were trained in promoting sustainable tourism in a collaboration between WWF, TRAFFIC, Intrepid Group, Trip.com, the Luang Prabang Provincial Office of Forest Inspection, and the Provincial Office of Information Culture and Tourism.⁴⁷

In a separate project directed at tourists, China Customs and the National Forestry and Grassland Administration worked with WWF and WildAid to launch a campaign featuring the celebrity Huang Xuan with the message “Souvenirs Could Be Contraband”, aimed at reducing the purchase and cross-border transport of ivory by Chinese travelers. The video part of this campaign had a remarkable reach with over 104 million people viewing the campaign video via social media or on TV. There were also almost 3,000 campaign posters placed at billboards at airports, railway stations, and ports in 21 cities.

POLICY

Asian and African elephants have been listed in CITES Appendix I since 1975 and 1990, respectively. However, following the population recovery of African elephants in some countries (Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe), they were moved to Appendix II with some restrictions.^{51,52,53} Elephants were a topic of much debate at CITES CoP18 in 2019, in particular, the chasm grew even wider between some southern African countries who believe that trade can benefit conservation efforts and livelihoods, and other African countries who believe that any trade threatens the species.⁵⁴

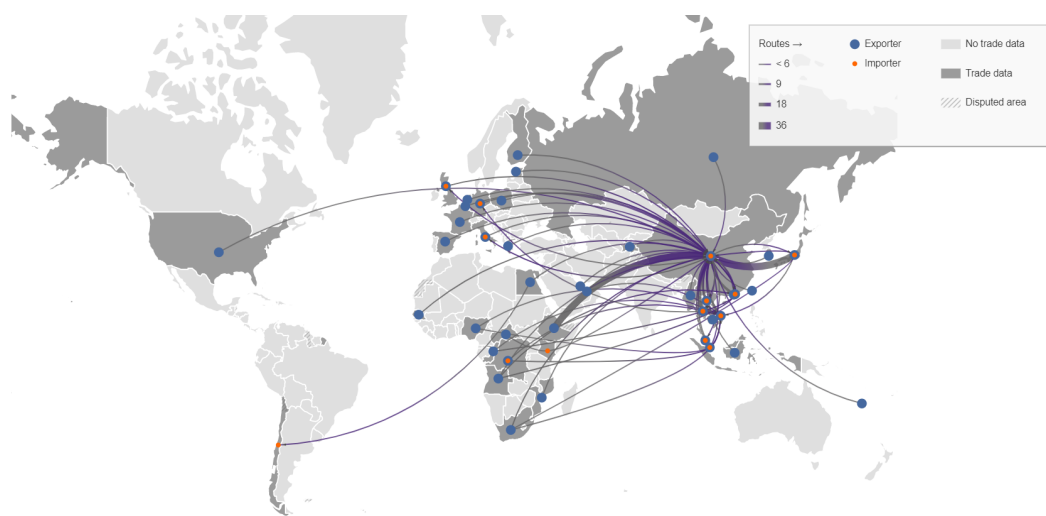
At CITES CoP18, amendments to Resolution 10.10 (Rev CoP17) Trade in Elephant Specimens, which would have urged Parties to close all remaining legal domestic ivory markets, were not adopted.⁵⁵ The CoP agreed a decision directing Parties to report on what measures they are taking to ensure that

their domestic ivory markets are not contributing to poaching or illegal trade. These reports will be considered by the Standing Committee and recommendations will be made as appropriate to the scope of the Convention.⁵⁶

LAW ENFORCEMENT

In 2019 there were 380 reported seizures of elephant products in, or linked to, the focal countries. These seizures involved a total of 48,217 kg of elephant products, demonstrating persistently significant levels of trade linked to Asian market destinations. Information on trade routes and patterns, prosecutions, and the top 20 seizures by volume can be found below.

4.2 TRADE ROUTES



Map 3. Trade routes identified for elephant seizures in 2019 as reported in WiTIS

Lines are weighted by the amount seized in kg along these routes.

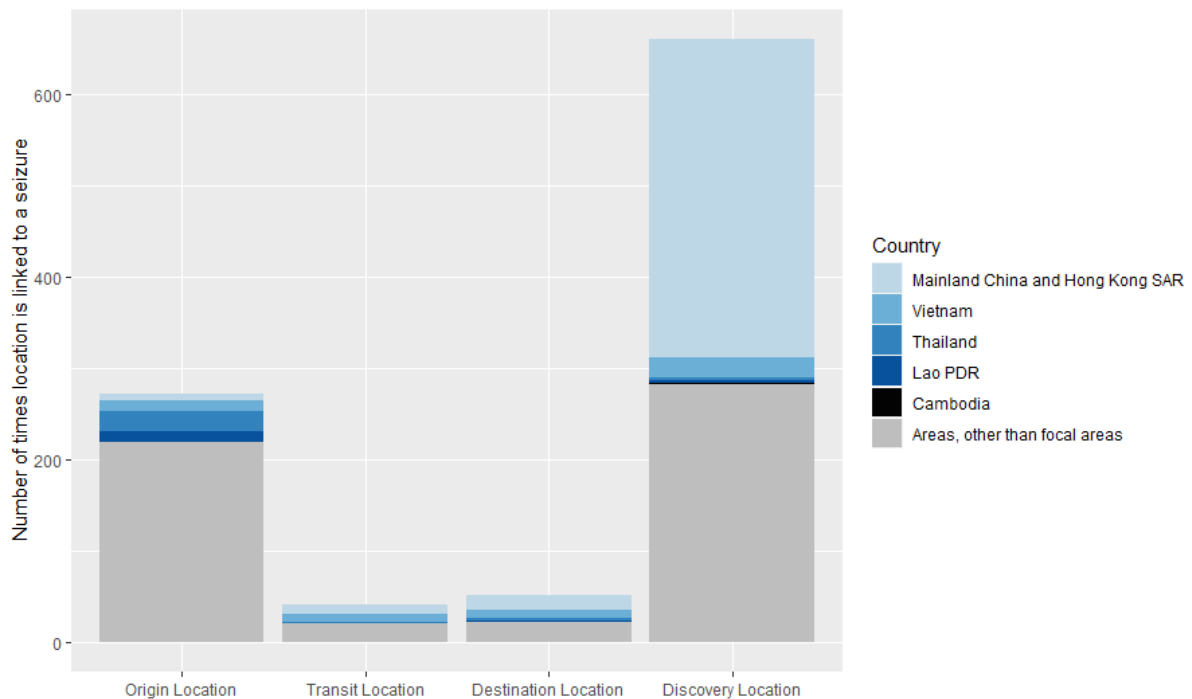


Figure 3. Elephant seizure locations

A total of 380 open-source records of elephant seizures were recorded in WiTIS, which were linked to the focal locations (China including Hong Kong SAR, Cambodia, Vietnam, Lao PDR, and Thailand) and other areas (outside countries of interest) in 2019. These may have been the location of seizure or discovery or have been implicated as an origin, transit, or destination location in a seizure made elsewhere. The analysis of data submitted by CITES Parties to ETIS for 2018 and 2019 is not yet available and therefore it is not possible to determine whether the open source seizures reflect ETIS data.

MYANMAR AS A KEY TRAFFICKING ROUTE FOR ASIAN ELEPHANT PRODUCTS

One route identified for trade in Asian elephant ivory and skin is from Myanmar to China^{57,58,59} where the demand for traditional medicine and jewelry is driving the trade.^{57,58} This trade is currently primarily threatening the declining populations of Asian elephants in Myanmar, but the poaching trend is spreading to northern India and Thailand.⁵⁷

MOZAMBIQUE AND NIGERIA AS TRADE HUBS FOR AFRICAN ELEPHANTS

Mozambique and Nigeria are two of the most active exporting countries for illegal ivory from African elephants,⁵¹ and Nigeria in particular has been implicated as a hub for consolidating ivory from different parts of Africa before export. Crime syndicates have most likely moved their operations to Nigeria and Mozambique following tighter regulations in Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda.⁵¹ Countries such as Lao PDR act as transit points for ivory. Since the Elephant Trade and Information System (ETIS) analyses began in 2002 it has suggested that China was the most significant destination for ivory.¹¹ Since the domestic ban of ivory in China in 2017, however, market surveys have suggested a decline in ivory being openly sold in China but an expansion of sales in Vietnam.^{60,61}

In 2019 data a high level of trade to Vietnam is reflected in the 13,765 kg of ivory seized in, or en route to, Vietnam. While there may be fewer seizures reported in Vietnam than in China, the scale of many of these seizures highlights how important Vietnam is as a destination for ivory.

IVORY AND OTHER WILDLIFE TRADING OCCURRING ONLINE

Twenty ivory seizures in the focal countries involved online trading. Online wildlife trading has been increasing globally for some time and is likely to continue. A survey of social media accounts in China between 2017 and 2018 found that elephant products made up 46 percent of the illegal wildlife advertisements.⁶² To combat this, major internet companies, including Google, Alibaba, eBay, Rakuten, Tencent, and Facebook, formed the Coalition to End Wildlife Trafficking Online. These companies agreed to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to illicit wildlife trade and have set a goal of reducing online wildlife trafficking by 80 percent by 2020.⁶³

JAPAN TO CHINA TRAFFICKING ROUTE FOR ELEPHANT PRODUCTS

A high number of seizures occurred on an ivory trafficking route from Japan to China. This route has previously been highlighted by both TRAFFIC⁶⁴ and the CoPI7 ETIS report.⁶⁵ Japan has an unusual position globally in terms of its policy towards ivory trading.⁶⁶ At CITES CoPI6, Parties called for the closure of domestic ivory markets. Japan, however, refused to ban internal ivory trading and has continued to be supportive of its domestic ivory market.⁶⁶ The CITES CoPI7 ETIS report suggested that there is limited evidence linking Japan's domestic market to ivory shipments coming from Africa, since much of the ivory in Japan likely enters the contemporary market from stockpiles or private collections already held in Japan.⁶⁵ However, there is evidence of Japanese ivory leaking into other markets, including trafficking to China.⁶⁴ Between 2011 and 2016, over 2.1 tons of ivory linked to exports from Japan to China were seized.⁶⁴

As a side note, despite pressure from the conservation community and other concerned stakeholders, a large legal domestic ivory market continues to operate in Thailand. The first concern is that while the government has taken steps to reduce the illegal ivory trade, and no large-scale ivory seizures (>500 kg) have been recorded for the last few years, a legal market will continue to provide opportunities for laundering of illegal African ivory. Furthermore, since China closed its domestic ivory market, research undertaken by WWF has indicated that Chinese tourists are increasingly buying ivory when they travel in countries or territories where legal markets continue to operate such as Thailand, Hong Kong SAR, and Cambodia.⁶⁷

4.3 SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS

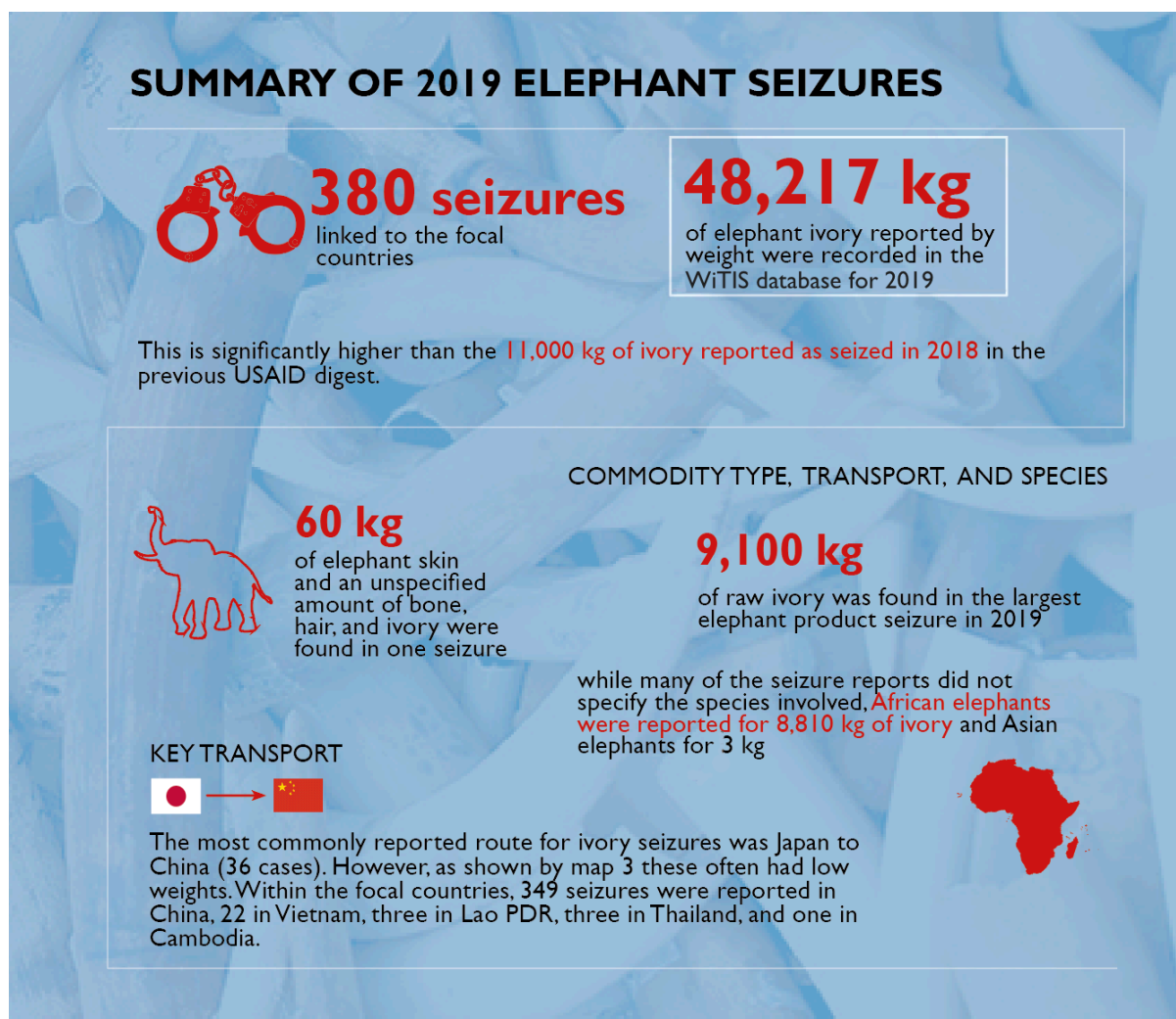


TABLE 7. TOP 20 ELEPHANT SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2019, RANKED BY VOLUME OF SEIZURE

NO.	DATE	LOCATION	SUMMARY	ITEMS SEIZED
1	Mar 26	Vietnam	Suspicious consignment arriving at Tien Sa Port, Da Nang from the Republic of Congo was inspected by customs officials. A total of 9,100 kg of ivory was found concealed under sawn wood. The recipient of the consignment was identified as being from the neighboring province of Quang Nam (Haiquan Online, 2019h).	Elephantidae – ivory pieces (raw) – 9,100 kg
2	Jul 21	Singapore	Three containers declared as “timber” shipped from the Democratic Republic of Congo and destined for Vietnam contained 11,900 kg of pangolin scales and 8,800 kg of African elephant ivory, estimated to be worth US\$48.4 million (National Parks, 2019).*	<i>Loxodonta africana</i> – ivory pieces (raw) – 8,800 kg <i>Manis gigantea</i> – scales – 11,900 kg

3	Mar 30	Mainland China	A single raid conducted in the province of Anhui resulted in the arrest of 26 suspects and the seizure of 2,748 elephant tusks, weighing a total of 7,480 kg. The ivory was found in 62 wooden boxes in a disused factory in the remote town of Gaogou (South China Morning Post, 2019).	Elephantidae – tusks – 2,748 (7,480 kg)
4	Apr 12	Vietnam	A container transported by the Kota Johan ship travelling from the Democratic Republic of Congo was stopped at Nam Hai Dinh Vu port in Hai Phong city declared as “drum plastic resin”. Inside the plastic drums customs officials seized 3,978 kg of African elephant ivory and 3,448.5 kg of giant pangolin scales African elephant ivory (Haiquan Online, 2019i).*	<i>Loxodonta</i> – ivory pieces (raw) – 3,978 kg <i>Manis gigantea</i> – scales – 3,448.5 kg
5	Jan 16	Hong Kong SAR	Hong Kong Customs seized a shipment from Nigeria (valued at US\$7.9 million) 8,300 kg of pangolin scales and 2,100 kg of ivory from a container declared as “frozen beef”, destined for either China or Vietnam. Two employees of a trading company in Mong Kok were detained in connection (Hong Kong Customs, 2019c; Africa Sustainable Conservation News, 2019; BBC, 2019).*	<i>Manis</i> – scales – 8,300 kg Elephantidae – tusk – 2,100 kg
6	Jan 31	Uganda	Containers transported by trucks from the Democratic Republic of Congo via South Sudan were seized in Kampala. Inside the containers 424 kg of pangolin scales and 3,000 kg of elephant tusks were found covered in wax and concealed inside hollowed out logs. Two Vietnamese nationals involved in a racket smuggling wildlife to Vietnam were detained (Al Jazeera, 2019; Journal du Cameroun, 2019).*	Elephantidae – ivory pieces (raw) – 762 (3,000 kg) <i>Manis</i> – scales – 424 kg
7	Jan 25	Vietnam	A shipment arriving from Lagos declared to contain wood was screened at Nam Hai Dinh Vu port in Hai Phong city and inside the container authorities found 1,500 kg of pangolin scales and 500 kg of ivory concealed inside wooden crates under layers of wood. The recipient of the goods was identified as VIC Thanh Binh Import-Export Co. located in Hanoi. The container had been declared to contain wood. (Customs News, 2019).*	<i>Manis</i> – scales – 1,500 kg Elephantidae – ivory pieces (raw) – 500 kg

8	May 22	Mainland China	Nanning Customs department investigated a criminal gang engaged in smuggling wildlife across the Sino-Vietnamese border into Guangxi province, often using different routes to evade detection. In May 2019, Nanning Customs set up roadblocks and check points and successfully intercepted the suspects in Shangsi County. A total of 81 pieces of ivory weighing 350 kg was seized and three vehicles were confiscated (Baidu, 2019a).	Elephantidae – ivory pieces (raw) – 81 (349.59 kg)
9	Dec 10	Vietnam	Three containers addressed to a recipient in Hanoi were inspected at Hai Phong Port after being transported from Nigeria via Quy Nhon Port, Binh Dinh. The container was declared to contain “Douisse Wood” and 1,700 kg of pangolin scales in addition to 330 kg raw ivory were found concealed among the wood (Haiquan Online, 2019f).*	<i>Manis</i> – scales – 1,700 kg Elephantidae – ivory pieces (raw) – 330 kg
10	Feb 24	Mainland China	The owner of a hotel in Changzhou, with ties to foreign smuggling gangs, was arrested along with two accomplices for smuggling 300 kg of raw and worked ivory (Baidu, 2019b).	Elephantidae – worked ivory – 39 Elephantidae – ivory pieces (raw) – 34 Total weight = 300 kg
11	Jun 27	Vietnam	Hanoi City police detained a suspect carrying four white sacks in Hanoi. Within the sacks police found 16 pieces of ivory weighing 109 kg, a further 13 pieces (98 kg) were voluntarily provided to the police. The suspect has appeared before court and charged (Ministry of Public Security, 2019).	Elephantidae – ivory pieces (raw) – 29 (207 kg)
12	Apr 3	Singapore	A container labelled to contain frozen beef coming from Nigeria and destined for Vietnam was seized at the Pasir Panjang Export Stations. A total of 117 kg of ivory and 12,900 kg pangolin scales from four species were found concealed among the frozen beef (Reuters, 2019; Channel News Asia, 2019).*	Elephantidae – worked ivory and ivory pieces (raw) – 177 kg <i>Manis gigantea</i> - Scales <i>Manis temminckii</i> - scales <i>Manis tetradactyla</i> - scales <i>Manis tricuspis</i> – scales Total weight scales = 12,900 kg
13	Mar 26	Mainland China	Nanning Customs conducted an operation in Dongxing City, Guangxi province and arrested three suspects in possession of 37 pieces of ivory (170.45 kg), 60 kg of elephant skin, 1.2 kg rhino horn in addition to a shotgun and ammunition (Sina, 2019e).*	Elephantidae – ivory pieces (raw) – 37 (170.45 kg) Elephantidae – skin – 60 kg Rhinocerotidae – horn – 1.2 kg

14	Jan 30	Vietnam	A shipment registered to recipient VIC Thanh Binh Import-Export Co. (Hanoi) was seized at Hai Phong Port arriving from Lagos, Nigeria. An estimated 100 kg of ivory and 1,400 kg of pangolin scales were found concealed inside wooden crates within the container (Haiquan Online, 2019g).*	Elephantidae – tusk – 20 (100 kg) <i>Manis</i> – scales – 1,400 kg
15	Jan 2019	Lao PDR	Police detained the owner of a souvenir shop in Luang Prabang in possession of 3,400 ivory products found concealed in drawers under the counters of the shop (Eleven, 2019).	Elephantidae – worked ivory – 3,400 (73.8 kg)
16	Jan 2019	Vietnam	Border Guards positioned at Ban Man Village in the Trung Khanh District apprehended a suspect attempting to smuggle 25 elephant tusks and 52 ivory pieces into China (Voice of Vietnam, 2019).	Elephantidae – ivory pieces (raw) - 52 Elephantidae – tusks - 25 Total Weight = 51 kg
17	Jan 16	Mainland China	The owner of an antique shop in Beijing was apprehended at Beijing Capital Airport in possession of ivory carvings. Police conducted a search of the shop and seized ivory carvings totaling 37 kg (Legal Daily, 2019).	Elephantidae – worked ivory – 37 kg
18	Feb 9	Mainland China	Urumqi Customs conducted a raid in Tangshan, Hebei Province and detained a suspect in possession of over 32 kg of ivory and other wildlife products (QQ, 2019).	Elephantidae – worked ivory (32.385 kg)
19	Feb 25	Mainland China	Jinan Customs conducted an operation in Jinan and Jinzhou seizing a total of 32.3 kg of ivory and whale teeth. Investigations revealed that suspects were purchasing the goods on the internet from Japan to be smuggled into China via the postal service using fake names (DZWWW, 2019).	Elephantidae – ivory pieces (raw) – 32.3 kg
20	Mar 6	Mainland China	Seizures in Lhasa and Zhengzhou resulted in the confiscation of almost 30 kg of worked ivory and other illegal wildlife products. The suspects would smuggle goods across the Sino-Vietnamese border to Henan from where goods would be sent via domestic transport and post to Qinghai, Tibet, and other locations to be sold (GX News, 2019).*	Elephantidae – worked ivory – 29.585 kg <i>Panthera tigris</i> – skins – two

* Seizures included in multiple tables.

4.4 SUMMARY

Populations of African elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) and Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) have both undergone major declines throughout their ranges in sub-Saharan Africa and South and Southeast Asia, respectively, with threats to populations including habitat loss, human-animal conflict, and poaching for a range of products including skin, meat, and tusks.^{51,57,58,68,69} A total of 380 seizures of elephant products, which involved 48,217 kg of ivory, were recorded in the WiTIS database for 2019 linked to

the five target countries. In addition, 60 kg of elephant skin and an unspecified amount of bone and hair was also seized. This is significantly higher, representing a four-fold increase, than the reports of 11,000 kg of ivory reported as seized in 2018 in the CWT Digest II.²¹ While this is at least partly due to the greater number of data sources used for this digest, it is also a trend that needs to be closely monitored moving forward.

Online trading is playing an increasingly important role in the illegal wildlife trade. Another important finding is the high number of seizures that took place on the ivory trafficking route from Japan to China. Japan has previously been identified as having one of the largest active domestic markets for ivory in the world, and there is evidence of Japanese ivory leaking into other markets, including China.



5 RHINOS

5.1 SITUATION UPDATE

CONSUMER DEMAND

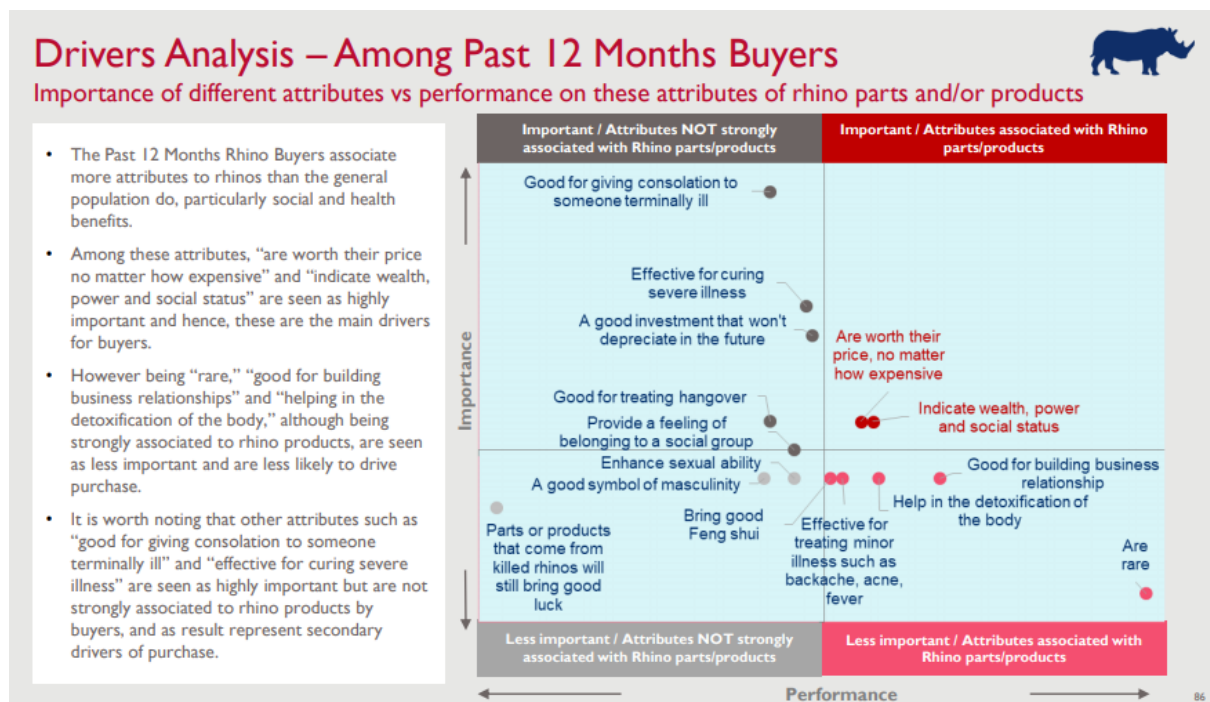
Rhino horn is consumed to demonstrate wealth and status, and also as a perceived curative and preventative treatment in some forms of traditional medicine.⁷⁰ In Vietnam, for example, the entire horn can be displayed as a status object. Rhino horn powder is used as a purported detoxicant and hangover cure, and for its historical application in formal traditional medicine prescriptions, such as a treatment for severe illness and to remove heat from the blood. Rhino horn beads and carved items are used for household decoration and personal adornment, while a trade in collectibles and antiques, including intricately carved libation cups, persists. Research in Vietnam conducted between 2014 and 2018 indicates buyers are most likely to be male, between 35 and 55 years of age, and with middle to high incomes. Buyers and those intending to buy rhino horn tend to be less concerned about extinction of the species, as their scarcity is part of the appeal.^{5,6}

TABLE 8. MOTIVATIONS FOR BUYING RHINO PRODUCTS

PRODUCT	MOTIVATION	USE
Horn powder	Health	Tonics for wellness (to reduce drunkenness, as a detoxicant and hangover cure, also as an aphrodisiac) and treatments for illness (to remove heat from the blood) ⁵
Horn powder	Status	Conspicuous consumption /purchase for a profligate display of wealth: associated with the difficulty to acquire RH due to illegality/extremely high cost

Horn – either a part of a whole horn, or as beads, balls or powdered	Gifting	To impress peers, colleagues, family or friends, to align oneself with a certain social circle or impress in a business or commercial setting, to “seal the deal”
Horn beads	Display	Rhino horn bracelets may be used for good luck, also for status (i.e. conspicuous consumption)
Horn (in any form)	Investment	As a store of financial value
Horn (entire) /carvings	Household display	For conspicuous consumption, peace of mind, or to have in the house in case a loved one needs treatment for illness

USAID’s 2018 report *Research Study on Consumer Demand for Elephant, Rhino, Pangolin Products in Vietnam* identified drivers for consumption among users of rhino horn, as shown in the figure below.



Source: USAID Saving Species

In 2019, TRAFFIC and WWF delivered a number of behavior change communication activities aiming to reduce demand for rhino products in Vietnam and China. Most significantly, TRAFFIC and USAID Wildlife Asia launched the third phase of the Chi initiative in December 2019 in Vietnam. The Chi initiative targets the demand for rhino horn by businessmen seeking to enhance their social status. TRAFFIC partners such as the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Central Buddhist Association, and other commercial and civil society leaders are rolling out this social marketing campaign. In addition to the Chi campaign in Vietnam, WWF delivered several social media activities through their Weibo and WeChat accounts in China, and TRAFFIC engaged Chinese tourists and conducted research with government leaders in Vietnam. This work is continuing into 2020 with impact assessments.

POLICY

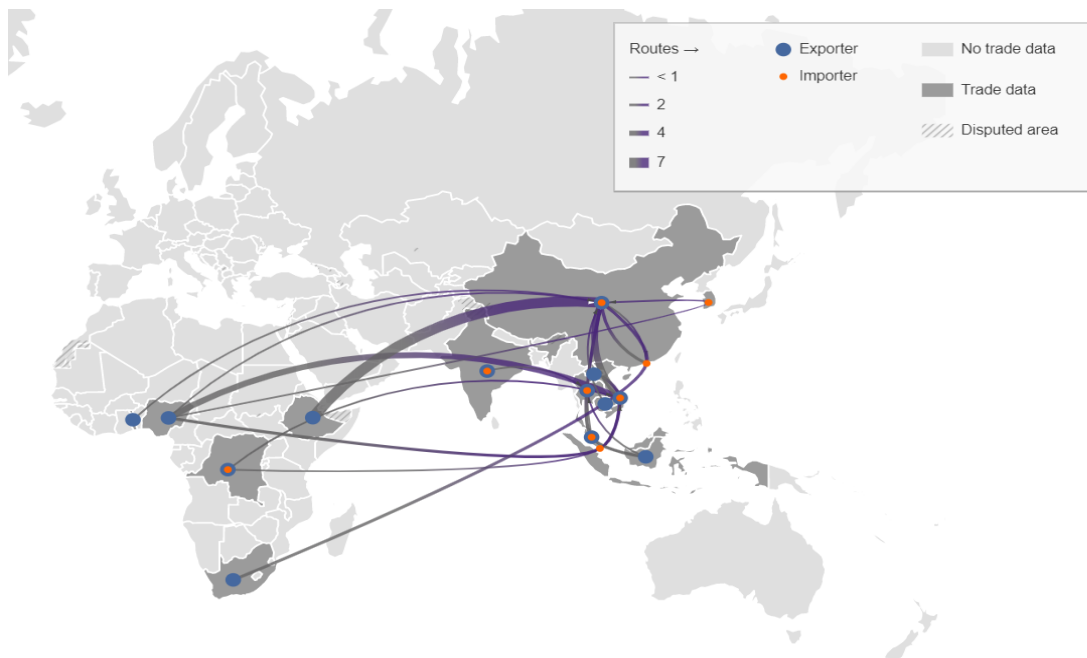
All species of rhino are listed in CITES Appendix I except the Southern White Rhino (*Ceratotherium simum simum*) populations in South Africa and eSwatini. In October 2018, China indicated they would allow rhino horn to be used for medicinal purposes, but a few weeks later they postponed lifting the ban, pending further study.⁷¹ There have been repeated efforts to legalize the rhino trade, for example eSwatini proposed permitting rhino horn trade from its population at both CITES CoP17 and CITES CoP18.^{72,73}

Parties agreed at CoP18 to address the ongoing threat of poaching and trade, and Kenya proposed the closure of all domestic rhino horn markets. Although this did not gain full support, Parties did agree that where illegal markets for rhino horn exist that demand reduction programs should be pursued, interlinked with efforts to deliver Resolution 17.4 on Demand Reduction Strategies to Combat Illegal Trade in CITES-listed species.⁷⁴ They were also urged to review trends of rhino poaching and trade, and the efforts taken to address these. China, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, South Africa, and Vietnam were encouraged to strengthen their implementation of Resolution Conf. 9.14 on the Conservation of, and Trade in, African and Asian Rhinoceroses, including by pursuing the initiation of joint investigations and operations to address organized crime networks across the entire illegal trade chain.⁷⁴

LAW ENFORCEMENT

In 2019 there were 34 reported seizures of rhinos involving the focal countries, totaling 519 kg of rhino products, demonstrating that illegal trade in rhino horn persists in Asia. Information on trade routes and patterns, prosecutions, and the top 20 seizures by volume can be found below.

5.2 TRADE ROUTES



Map 4. Trade routes identified for rhino seizures in 2019 as reported in WiTIS

Lines are weighted by the amount seized in kg along these routes.

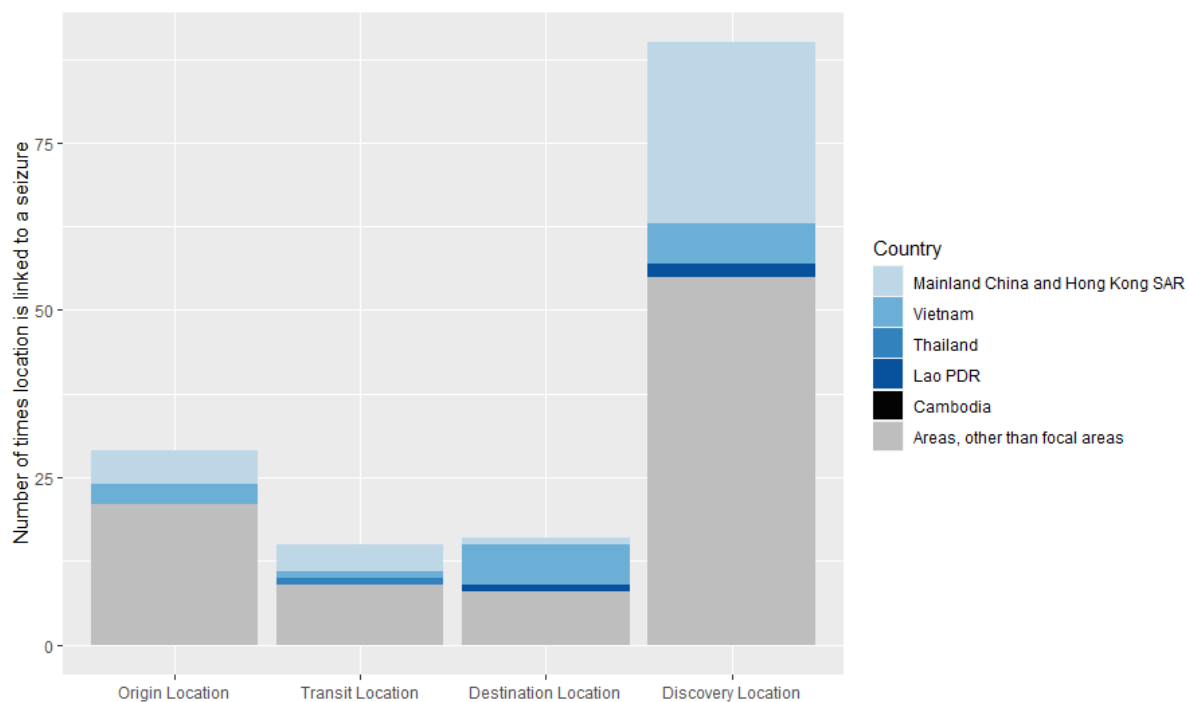


Figure 4. Rhino seizure locations

A total of 34 rhino seizures were recorded in WiTIS which were linked to the focal locations (China including Hong Kong SAR, Cambodia, Vietnam, Lao PDR, and Thailand) and other areas (outside countries of interest) in 2019. Locations can be linked as an origin, transit, destination, and/or discovery location.

SOUTH AFRICA AND MOZAMBIQUE ON THE AFRICAN RHINO TRADE ROUTE

South Africa and Mozambique have been implicated as countries that illegally export rhino horn.⁷⁵ South Africa has a higher number of rhinos than any other country, an estimated 17,671 individuals; therefore, the horns exported from South Africa are likely to have originated in-country.⁷⁵ Populations of rhino in Mozambique are so low, with only an estimated 30 individuals, that much of the horn exported from Mozambique is likely to have been poached in South Africa before being smuggled across to the border.⁷⁵ Many of the horns are smuggled from Africa by organized crime syndicates⁷⁰ primarily to consumers in Vietnam and China.⁷⁵

UNCERTAINTY ON TRADE ROUTES FOR ASIAN RHINOS

Given the relatively low number of Asian rhino products traded—between 2014 and 2018, 75 Asian rhino horns were seized, compared with 2,955 horns and horn pieces from African species⁷⁵—there is far less information about established trade routes. Some Asian species, like the Sumatran rhino (*Dicerorhinus sumatrensis*), have populations as low as 40 to 78 individuals, which makes the seizure of even three Sumatran rhino horns between 2014 and 2018 a cause for concern.⁷⁵ In these data there was also a case of rhino horn being sold after a poaching event reported to have taken place in India. Myanmar is a key transit point, with horns being smuggled from the Indian States of West Bengal and Assam via Mandalay, then on to China and other destination countries.⁷⁵

VIETNAM TO CHINA TRAFFICKING ROUTE

Vietnam is one of the main countries implicated in the illegal trade of rhino horn and aside from end-use demand at a national level, it remains an important part of the trafficking route to China (see Map 4 and Figure 4). This finding is strongly supported by previous studies which have highlighted Vietnam as both an important transit point and end-use market.^{5,76} Understanding the profiles of individuals in Vietnam who are involved in the trade and consumption of rhino horn is needed to effectively combat the trade. A report published at the end of 2018 sheds new insight into why people in Vietnam buy rhino horn, and these factors that may deter use in the future.⁵ These and other insights from the study will enable targeted behavior change campaigns to reduce the demand for rhino horn in Vietnam.

SOUTH AFRICA AS A RHINO EXPORTING COUNTRY

These data show the importance of South Africa (see Map 4) as an exporter to a range of markets, including China. This trend is well known, and there are serious concerns about the high level of rhino poaching in South Africa supported by organized crime syndicates.⁷⁷ South Africa is one of the few countries with a legal domestic trade in rhino horn.⁷⁷ There have been serious criticisms of the legalization of this domestic trade as there is limited evidence of a wide market for rhino horn products within South Africa.⁷⁷ Instead, the international crime syndicates that already traffic poached horn could launder legal horn into the illegal trade.⁷⁷

South Africa's economy is highly dependent on tourism and any disruption to the industry will greatly hamper the ability of protected areas to fund conservation and anti-poaching activities. This would likely lead to a significant spike in poaching.¹ Organizations have highlighted how both the short-term impacts of a lack of tourism-based funding and the longer-term impacts of a probable increase in poverty would have serious conservation implications for rhino conservation.^{1,78}

5.3 SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS

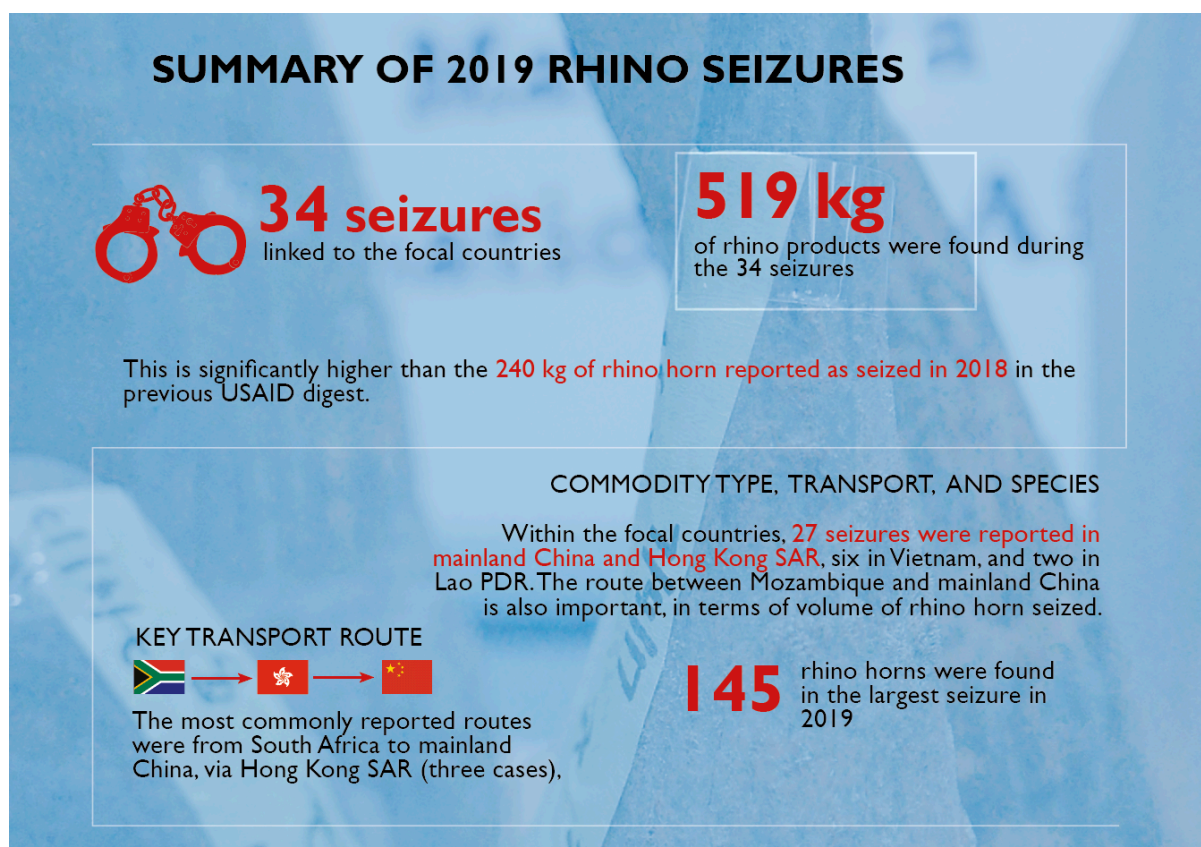


TABLE 9. TOP 20 RHINO SEIZURES AND PROSECUTIONS IN 2019, RANKED BY VOLUME OF SEIZURE

NO.	DATE	LOCATION	SUMMARY	ITEMS SEIZED
1	Jun 6	Mainland China	The vessel <i>Sea Pioneer</i> travelling from Mozambique was detained off the coast of Shantou and authorities seized 145 rhino horns (US\$14.5 million) found concealed inside nylon bags in the engine room. Other illegal wildlife products were seized including ivory and 18 suspects were detained (FJ Sen, 2019).	Rhinocerotidae – horn – 145 (250 kg) Elephantidae – ivory pieces (raw) – 30 (3.68 kg) Elephantidae – worked ivory – one (0.83 kg) (necklace)
2	Jul 7	Vietnam	Customs officials at Noi Bai International Airport, Hanoi, discovered a consignment of 55 pieces of rhino horn weighing 125.15 kg, concealed inside plaster to evade detection. The air cargo was transported on an Etihad Airways flight en route from the United Arab Emirates (Haiquan Online, 2019a).	Rhinocerotidae – horn pieces (raw) – 55 (125.15 kg)

3	Apr 5	Hong Kong SAR	Customs officials at Hong Kong International Airport received intelligence resulting in the seizure of 82.5 kg of rhino horn found concealed in a cargo shipment arriving from South Africa and destined for Malaysia. The cargo had been declared to contain “auto parts” (Hong Kong Customs, 2019a).	Rhinocerotidae – horn pieces (raw) – 82.5 kg
4	Feb 14	Hong Kong SAR	Hong Kong International Airport Customs intercepted two male passengers travelling from South Africa to Vietnam with 40 kg of suspected rhino horns concealed inside carton boxes within their check-in luggage. They both appeared before court and were sentenced to 26 months in prison each (Hong Kong Customs, 2019b; DimSum Daily, 2019).	Rhinocerotidae – horn – 40 kg
5	May 21	South Africa	A suspect detained at O.R. Tambo Airport will stand trial for the possession of 22 rhino horns weighing 30 kg. The suspect had planned to smuggle the horns in a suitcase to Vietnam via the United Arab Emirates (Times Live, 2019).	Rhinocerotidae – horn – 22 (30 kg)
6	Jul 4	Japan	A Laotian national travelling to Lao PDR via Vietnam was apprehended at Tokyo Narita International Airport in possession of 220 illegal wildlife products including white rhino bones, ivory, and cheetah teeth. The suspect worked at the Fuji Safari Park and apparently collected items from both live and dead animals to be given to friends and family for decorations (Japan Times, 2019).	<i>Ceratotherium simum</i> – bone <i>Elephas</i> – bone <i>Elephas</i> – hair <i>Loxodonta</i> – ivory pieces (raw) Total weight = 220 kg
7	Apr 11	Vietnam	A South African national appeared before Hanoi Court and was sentenced to 10 years in prison for smuggling 14.6 kg of rhino horn from South Africa to Vietnam. The rhino horn pieces were found wrapped in foil and concealed in biscuit boxes and milk powder within the luggage at Noi Bai International Airport (Haiquan Online, 2019b; ENV, 2019).	Rhinocerotidae – horn pieces (raw) – 14.6 kg
8	Feb 8	Turkey	Two Vietnamese nationals travelling from South Africa to Vietnam were detained at Ataturk Airport in possession of 21 pieces of rhino horn (US\$2.8 million). The horns were detected in the luggage by X-ray (Ahval, 2019).	Rhinocerotidae – horn – 21 Rhinocerotidae – horn pieces (raw) - one

9	Jan 28	South Africa	Two suspects travelling to Vietnam were apprehended at O.R. Tambo Airport in possession of 10 pieces of rhino horn (estimated to be worth US\$147,000). The suspects had concealed the horn pieces in their luggage. They are to appear before Kempton Park Magistrates Court (Kempton Express, 2019).	Rhinocerotidae – horn pieces (raw) - 10
10	Oct 2019	Mainland China	Three suspects travelling from Hong Kong SAR were found in possession of 9.79 kg of rhino horn pieces in their luggage. The suspects admitted being given the horns by a contact in South Africa (CCTV, 2019).	Rhinocerotidae – horn pieces (raw) – seven (9.79 kg) Rhinocerotidae – horn (worked) - 24
11	Jul 1	Mainland China	Shanghai Hongqiao International Airport officials intercepted three passengers carrying backpacks containing 31 pieces of rhino horn. The pieces had been transported from O.R. Tambo Airport via Hong Kong SAR and were transported by two of the suspects whilst communicating with the third using WeChat (Why.com, 2019).	Rhinocerotidae – horn pieces (raw) – 31
12	Jun 12	Mainland China	A female passenger arriving at Shenzhen Bay Port was intercepted by customs when her luggage passed through the X-ray. Rhino horn pieces totaling 6.5 kg were found concealed inside cartons within the luggage (Sohu, 2019b).	Rhinocerotidae – horn – 6.5 kg
13	Jan 2019	Mainland China	Police inspected the luggage of two suspects arriving at Fuzhou Train Station from Shenzhen. Inside the luggage the police found a rhino horn wrapped in foil and concealed inside a biscuit box, weighing 4.97 kg (China News, 2019a).	Rhinocerotidae – horn – one (4.97 kg)
14	Jun 7	Vietnam	Two rhino horns seized from a residence in Mong Cai, a city on the border between Vietnam's Quang Ninh province and southern China. One of the horns was 50 cm in length and the other was 25 cm in length. The suspect arrested in connection now faces charges (Laodong, 2019).	Rhinocerotidae – horn – two
15	May 27	Mainland China	Shanghai Hongqiao Airport customs intercepted a female Chinese national after inspecting her luggage using an X-ray machine. The horn was 60cm in length and weighed a total of 2.86 kg (China Customs, 2019b).	Rhinocerotidae – horn – one (2.86 kg)

16	Jan 2019	Mainland China	Dalian Airport Customs inspected the luggage of a passenger arriving from Hong Kong SAR. Four rhino horn pieces, weighing 2.71 kg were found concealed inside biscuit and chocolate boxes (China Customs, 2019a).	Rhinocerotidae – horn pieces (raw) – four (2.71 kg)
17	Nov 7	Vietnam	A passenger arriving at Noi Bai International Airport from Angola via Thailand on flight VN614 was stopped by airport customs. The carry-on luggage the passenger was carrying was checked and inside two rhino horn pieces were found concealed inside an air compressing tank (Haiquan Online, 2019c).	Rhinocerotidae – horn pieces (raw) - two
18	Apr 2	Mainland China	An operation conducted in Qingdao and Nanning resulted in the arrest of 15 suspects and seizure of 10.9 kg of tiger bone, four pieces of tiger skin, and eight tiger teeth, among other wildlife products. The gang was using WeChat to coordinate trafficking of animals between Vietnam and China (dzwww.com, 2019).*	Rhinocerotidae – horn – 1.83 kg <i>Panthera tigris</i> – bone – 10.9 kg <i>Panthera tigris</i> – teeth – eight (0.14 kg) <i>Panthera tigris</i> – skin pieces – four Elephantidae – worked ivory – 21.6 kg Manidae – scales – 24.73 kg
19	May 13	Mainland China	Huanggang Customs intercepted a male suspect arriving at Futian Port, between Hong Kong SAR and Shenzhen, carrying hand luggage and a plastic bag. Upon inspection 152 pieces of rhino horn weighing 1.7 kg and estimated to be worth US\$62,000 were seized (Sina, 2019c).	Rhinocerotidae – horn pieces (raw) – 152 (1.7 kg)
20	Mar 26	Mainland China	Nanning Customs conducted an operation in Dongxing City, Guangxi (bordering Vietnam's city of Mong Cai) and arrested three suspects in possession of 37 pieces of ivory (170.45 kg), 60 kg of elephant skin and 1.2 kg of rhino horn. Authorities also confiscated a shotgun and ammunition (Sina, 2019e).*	Rhinocerotidae – horn - 1.2 kg Elephantidae – ivory pieces (raw) – 37 (170.45 kg) Elephantidae – skin – 60 kg

* Seizures included in multiple tables

5.4 SUMMARY

Poaching for rhino horn is a serious threat to rhino populations.^{75,79,80} Although all species of rhino suffer from poaching, the global trade is dominated by horn obtained from two African species, the white rhino and black rhino (*Ceratotherium simum* and *Diceros bicornis*). A total of 34 seizures of rhino products, which were either seized in the focal countries, or in seizures linked to the focal countries, were recorded on the WiTIS database in 2019. A total of 519 kg of rhino products were seized, which is significantly higher, almost double, than the 240 kg of rhino horn reported as seized in the 2018 CWT digest. This is at least partly due to the greater number of data sources used for this year's digest but is also indicative a possible upward trend in poaching and demand for rhino horn.

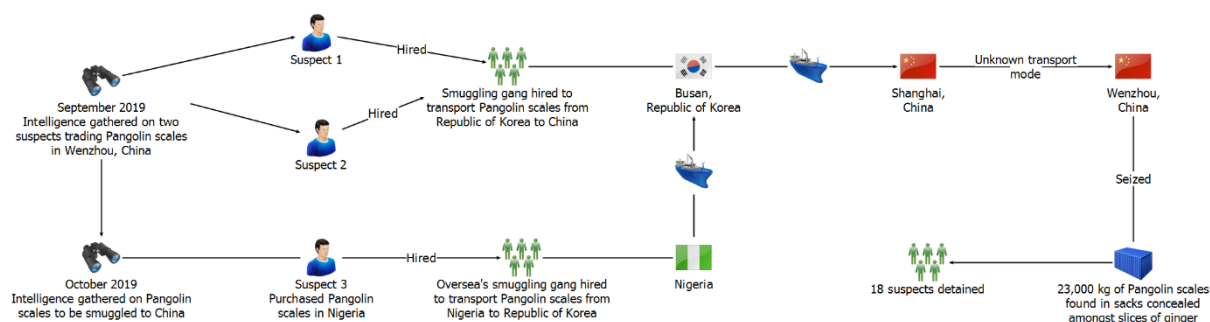
Seizures from 2019 indicate Vietnam remains a prominent country in the illegal trade and end-use demand for rhino horn and an important part of the trafficking route to China. A 2018 report sheds insights into why people in Vietnam buy rhino horn and the factors that may deter use in the future. This understanding will enable future targeted behavior change campaigns to reduce the demand for rhino horn.

Data also show the importance of South Africa as an exporter to a range of markets, including China. There are serious concerns about the high level of rhino poaching in South Africa linked to organized crime syndicates. South Africa's legal domestic trade in rhino horn may also contribute to masking some illegal trade.

6 KEY SEIZURES

6.1 PANGOLIN SEIZURES

WENZHOU, CHINA: 23,000 KG OF PANGOLIN SCALES SEIZED



Link Chart I. Pangolin scales (23,000 kg) seized in Wenzhou, China on October 31, 2019

The most significant pangolin seizure took place in China in October 2019. China Customs received intelligence that an illegal shipment was about to be smuggled into China. An investigation led to the discovery of 23,000 kg of pangolin scales (estimated to be derived from at least 50,000 pangolins).⁸¹ The scales were hidden in containers and mixed with slices of ginger. A suspect had purchased the pangolin scales in Nigeria and planned to transport them to the Republic of Korea; however, the shipment was seized as it was transferred from Shanghai to Wenzhou.

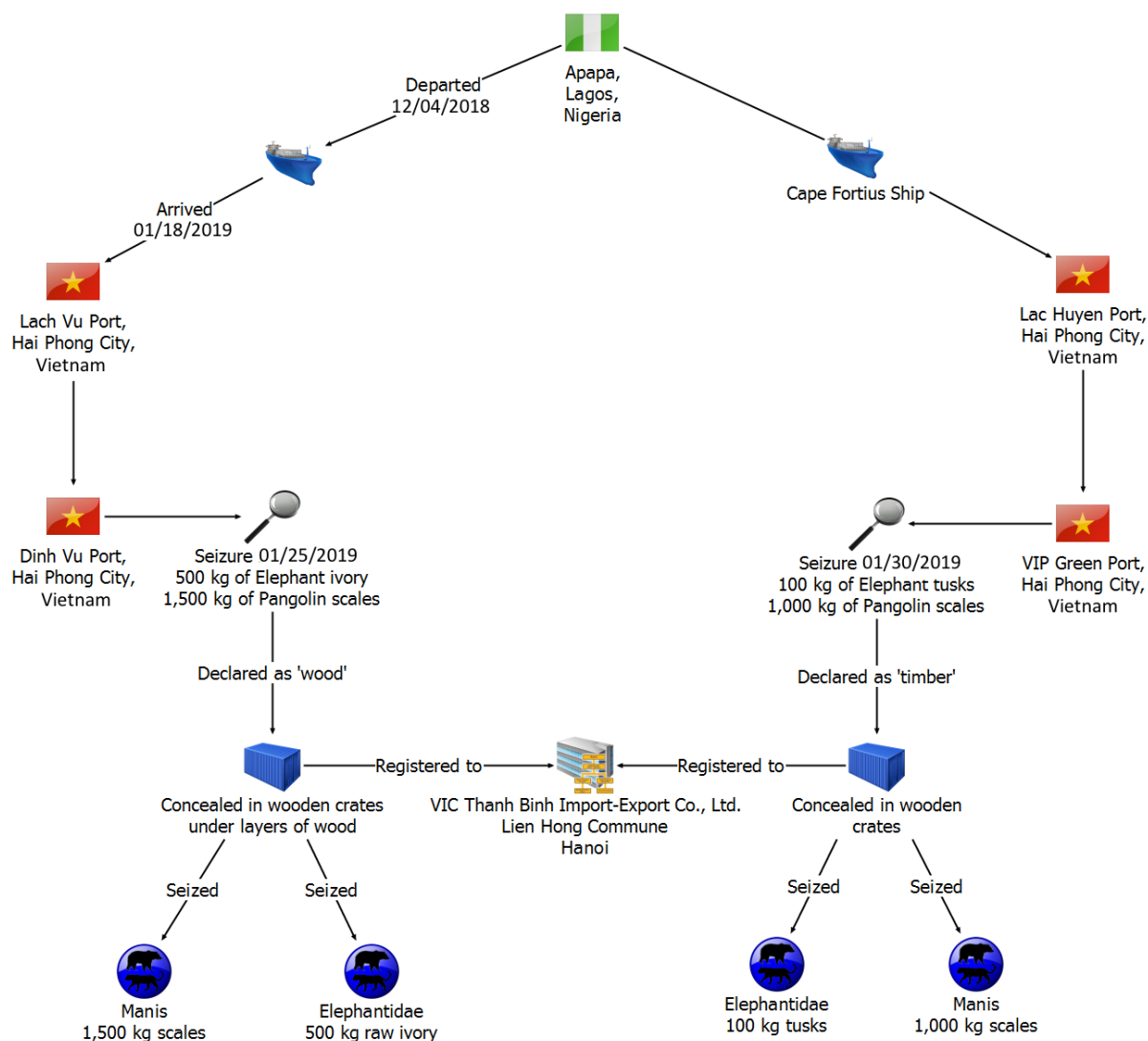
SINGAPORE: TWO SIGNIFICANT SEIZURES OF PANGOLIN SCALES

In 2019 Singapore reported two separate enormous seizures of pangolin scales within one week.⁸² On April 3, 2019 a remarkable seizure was made when Singapore customs officials intercepted a shipment at Pasir Panjang Export Inspection Station. The contents were declared as “frozen beef” and were en route from Nigeria to Vietnam. The seizure contained 12,900 kg of scales from an estimated 17,000 pangolins and was valued at US\$52 million. The seizure also uncovered 177 kg of elephant ivory alongside the pangolin scales.

Just a few days later on April 8, a second seizure was made of 12,700 kg of pangolin scales, equating to approximately 38,000 pangolins.⁸³ These were found in a ship which stopped at Singapore on its way from Nigeria to Vietnam and were concealed in a container declared to contain cassia seeds.⁸³

The scale of these seizures is important as the collection of that volume of illegal goods indicates the involvement of an organized criminal syndicate operating internationally, involving a group of poachers and middlemen to collect the wildlife products, as well as significant financial backing to accumulate such a large stockpile.⁸⁴ The seizure on April 3 also highlights the way in which criminal syndicates can work across products with different end markets, as ivory is primarily for decoration and pangolin scales for medicinal purposes.⁸⁴ The prominence of Singapore in these seizures highlights the role it plays as a transit country for crime syndicates to transport illegal goods from Africa to Asia. The success of Singaporean authorities in making such seizures is an important step towards discouraging the trade in illegal wildlife through the island nation.

HAI PHONG CITY, VIETNAM: TWO SEIZURES OF ELEPHANT IVORY AND PANGOLIN SCALES

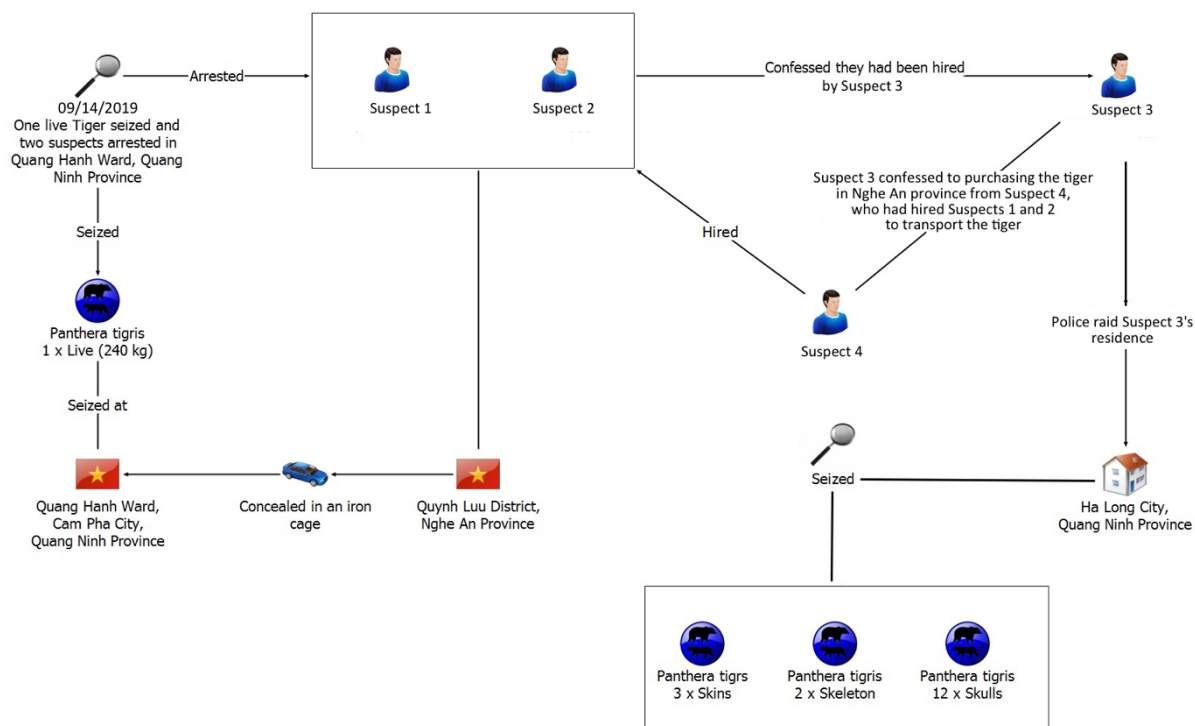


Link Chart 2. Two seizures of elephant ivory and pangolin scales in Hai Phong City (January 25, 2019 and January 30, 2019).

In January 2019 there were two significant seizures of elephant ivory and pangolin scales (Link Chart 2). One on January 25th which led to the discovery of 1,500 kg of pangolin scales, and 500 kg of ivory, and a second on January 30th which led to the discovery of 100 kg of ivory and 1,000 kg of pangolin scales. While these seizures took place in different ports (Dinh Vu and Green Port respectively), they were both discovered in the Hai Phong City, and were both found in wooden crates registered to VIC Than Binh Import-Export Co., Ltd. These seizures are important in that they use similar smuggling methods and are connected to the same company, highlighting how legitimate businesses can be used to hide illegal trade (see information on cases 11 and 12 in Table 3). The links between these crimes also highlight how they are part of an organized crime network, rather than occurring in isolation.

6.2 TIGER SEIZURES

QUANG NINH, VIETNAM: LIVE TIGER AND TIGER PARTS



Link Chart 3. Live tiger parts seized in Vietnam with two suspects arrested

On September 14, 2019 authorities in Quang Ninh province, Vietnam detained two suspects transporting a live adult tiger (240 kg), which was found in an iron cage in a truck. The suspects claimed they had transported the tiger from Nghe An province for a third suspect. The third suspect claimed that he had purchased the tiger from Nghe An and hired the two detainees to transport it to his property in Ha Long to make tiger bone glue. Authorities searched his residence following claims that that was where the tiger was being taken, where they confiscated two tiger skeletons, 12 tiger skulls, and three tiger skins. In addition, equipment used to make bone glue were also seized from the property. The number of tigers involved suggest an organized production of tiger bone products, as well as trafficking of tigers for this purpose within Vietnam.

LAO PDR AND VIETNAM: FROZEN TIGERS

On July 23, 2019, following a long-term investigation directed by the Anti-corruption and Smuggling sub-department of the Hanoi Police, the police investigated a car parked in Cau Giay district within the greater Hanoi area, where they found seven frozen tiger carcasses.^{85,86} Further investigation showed three suspects, had been involved in a tiger trafficking ring moving dead tigers from Lao PDR to Vietnam for several years. One individual was identified as the kingpin who would travel to Lao PDR to buy tiger carcasses (each of which could weigh up to 300 kg), before freezing them and moving them back to Vietnam, where he was using his local service and commerce company as a front for the illegal activities.^{85,86}

This case is significant as it highlights the role of Lao PDR as an important supplier of illicit tiger products. There is limited data on seizures in Lao PDR in comparison to other countries in the region, as well as limited information about consumer demand. This seizure suggests that while there are few

seizures reported in Lao PDR, it may not be representative of the levels of illegal wildlife trade in the country particularly as there are reports of Lao PDR having six tiger farms which are not linked to conservation or educational facilities.^{87,88} Research into the consumer demand for wildlife could provide valuable insights in this area.

6.3 ELEPHANT SEIZURES

TIEN SA PORT, VIETNAM: 9,100 KG RAW IVORY

A seizure in Vietnam led to the confiscation of a total of 9,100 kg of raw ivory, which represents one of the largest ivory seizures in recent years. This took place in Tien Sa Port, in the central Vietnam city of Danang, where the ivory was hidden among sawn wood inside containers on the boat. The shipment had been destined for a business address in the adjacent Quang Nam province. So far there have been no reports of prosecutions following from this case. This case highlights how legitimate businesses may be used as a front for illicit trade. While the exact details of the business registered as the delivery address for this shipment are unknown, other cases of wildlife trade (for example the abalone trade), have shown that cash-based businesses like night clubs can be used to launder money from illegal wildlife products, meaning financial investigations should be an integral part of wildlife crime investigations.⁸⁴

UGANDA AND SOUTH SUDAN: 750 PIECES OF IVORY

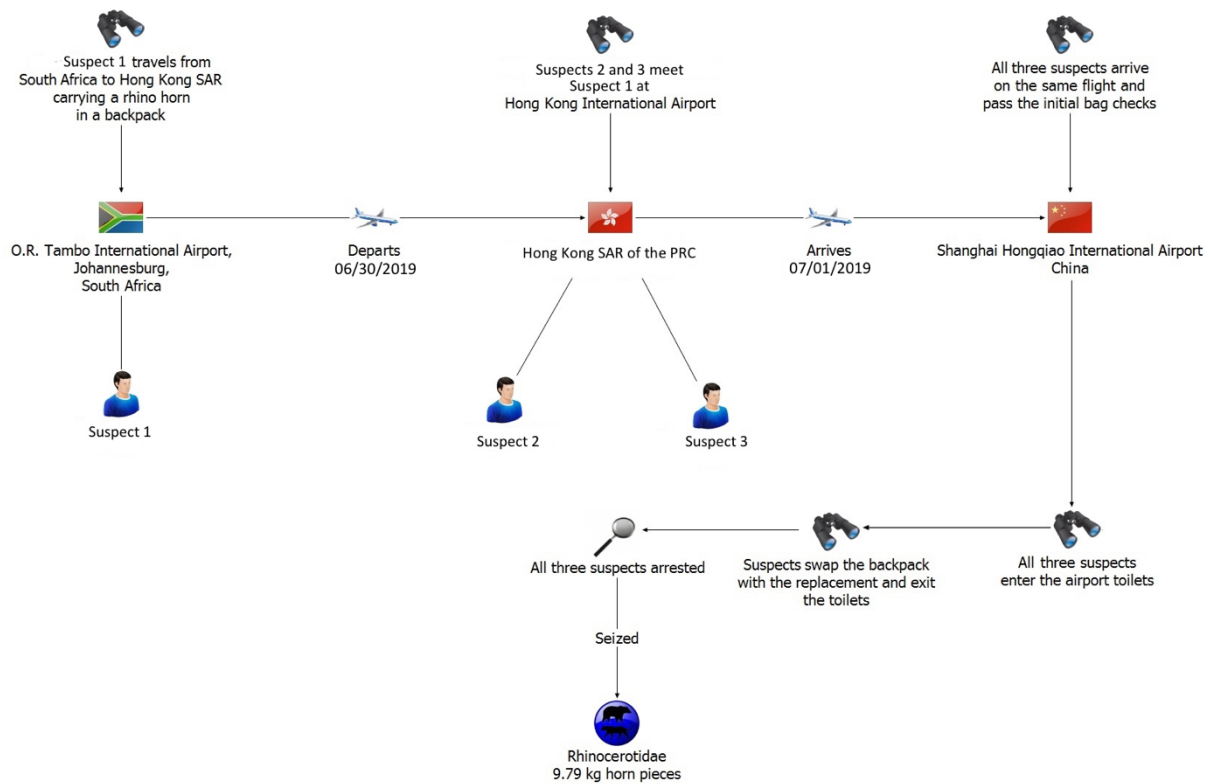
A second seizure of ivory in 2019 showed similar hallmarks to the first, which was also concealed in timber. This seizure occurred on the border between Uganda and South Sudan, and 750 pieces of ivory and thousands of pangolin scales were hidden inside hollowed logs.⁸⁹ In this case the goods were placed in the logs and set in wax with a hidden lid, then the joints were filled to further conceal them. The discovery of the wildlife products was made by a non-intrusive scanner. This seizure underscores the importance of developing technology to detect the transport of illicit goods available in countries along illegal wildlife trading routes.⁸⁹

6.4 RHINO SEIZURES

BEIJING, LIANION, HUBEI, GUANGXI AND OTHERS: 300 ANIMAL PRODUCTS INCLUDING RHINO HORN

Among the multiple seizures of rhino products in 2019, there were several unusual cases. One occurred at Shanghai Hongqiao International Airport where officials intercepted three passengers carrying backpacks containing 31 pieces of rhino horn. Two of the suspects transported the pieces from O.R. Tambo Airport in Johannesburg, via Hong Kong SAR, while communicating with the third suspect using WeChat.⁹⁰

In a separate seizure of 125 kg of horn at Noi Bai International airport in Hanoi, Vietnam, rhino horns were encased in plaster in order to evade detection. The plaster allegedly took half a day to dismantle, illustrating the innovative lengths to which smugglers will go to disguise their goods, and the challenges posed to law enforcement.⁹¹



Link Chart 4. Rhino horn seized at Shanghai Hongqiao International Airport (July 1, 2019)

A third highly significant seizure took place on August 13, 2019, after three months of planning for a joint Gongbei Customs Anti-Smuggling Bureau and Nanning Customs operation. A total of 200 police personnel, divided into 37 groups, simultaneously carried out arrests in multiple locations, including Beijing, Liaoning, Hubei, and Guangxi. Eventually 22 people were arrested and over 300 animal products, including rhino horn, tiger skins, pangolin, lion bones, bear claws, and Delacour's langurs (*Trachypithecus delacouri*) were seized.⁹² The total value of the products was US\$11.26 million.

The investigation and subsequent arrests revealed the operations of an international wildlife smuggling gang that had been working between China and Vietnam since 2016. Illicit wildlife products would be sourced in Vietnam, then sent to someone who picked the goods up at the border. That person would then take the products to designated individuals in China who would then distribute them. They used WeChat to organize the sale of goods,⁹³ including taking orders which they would relay to gang members in Vietnam, and then they dispatched the goods using postal services.⁹² The case study highlights the role that postal services can play in the distribution of illegal wildlife products.

7 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 DISCUSSION

Approximately 155,000 kg of pangolin products, 48,000 kg of ivory, and 519 kg of rhino horn have been reported in seizures linked to the five target countries in 2019. These figures are significantly higher than those compiled in the 2018 CWT digest, and while this increase is partly due to the differences in data collection, both sets of figures highlight that illegal wildlife trade is still a serious ongoing issue involving these target countries. There is also an alarming gap between the number of seizures of illegal wildlife products and the number of convictions resulting from these seizures. Looking at the ivory data for example, of the 380 reported seizures, there were only 72 seizures linked to arrests, and only four of those linked to convictions, which highlights a need for providing support to the legal systems in countries with low prosecution rates, as well as a need to provide suitable training and tools to officers involved in the investigation to allow evidence to be collected efficiently.

There may be bias in this data, as some of the cases may not have had a court date, or the court proceedings may be underreported by the media and authorities in comparison to incidents of seizures. Additionally, it must be noted that due to the significant differences in data sources used for this digest and previous digests, the levels of illegal trade for 2019 reported here cannot be directly compared to previous years.

However, even with these caveats in mind, the number of reported convictions is minimal. The importance for relevant law enforcement agencies to follow up on major seizure cases to obtain as much information as possible e.g. about the source and destination countries, personnel involved, modus operandi including trafficking routes, transport methods and modes of concealment, is essential to support data sharing and joint efforts to counter transnational organized crime. Multi-agency investigations into the seizures are needed, including financial investigations to “follow the money” where appropriate, and controlled deliveries to identify the end recipients, where possible.

It is often noted that criminals adapt their modus operandi depending on prevailing conditions, shifting routes to avoid detection, changing smuggling methods, and engaging logistics providers in their transactions to further distance themselves from their operations and evade prosecution. These adaptive pivots all challenge effective detection and law enforcement. The challenges include the increased use of the internet has led to the rapid growth of online marketplaces for wildlife buyers and sellers and the supporting transport infrastructure for delivery of product. Online trade is preferred by wildlife traders as it provides them with relative anonymity, with use of encrypted platforms and closed groups enabling the entire transaction to be kept between traders in online conversations, financial transactions taking place online often using digital currencies, and delivery using courier and logistics companies.

There have been some successes in reducing wildlife trade. For example, some countries have established stricter measures to control domestic trade, including mainland China and Hong Kong SAR’s policy to shut down domestic ivory markets, or Thailand’s improved Wildlife Conservation and Protection Act B.E. 2562 (2019), which took effect in Thailand at the end of 2019. Other countries have improved legislation, initiated demand reduction campaigns, and conducted notable seizures. This is to be applauded.

There is still much to do. A number of focal countries must address shortcomings in their legal and regulatory frameworks, including weakly enforced legislation, inadequate fines or penalties, lack of investigative capacity, low enforcement effort, high levels of corruption, and low prosecution and

conviction rates.^{94,95,96} These are all factors that enable illegal wildlife trade to continue. As long as the illegal wildlife trade offers high profit with relatively low risk, criminals will continue to be involved. A number of focal countries do not have suitable legislation or capacity in place, including Cambodia and Lao PDR. When any link in the effort to combat illegal wildlife trade is weak, it impacts the overall results.

However, it is important to understand that the illegal trade will not simply stop when one country increases enforcement or changes behaviors. Displacement into neighboring countries and locations often occurs rapidly. There are many opportunities to improve matters further, as seen with the case studies in this digest, well-resourced, long-term collaborative investigations have led to some significant seizures. With these successes in mind, it is more important now than ever that, along with stronger legislative frameworks, effective behavior change schemes, and adequate enforcement, there is a need for building strong national and international collaborations, and promoting the use of existing information sharing platforms including the platform provided by INTERPOL's Wildlife Crime Working Group (WCWG), Environet hosted by WCO and the TRAFFIC TWIX network.^{97,98} Recently the TWIX platform for data-sharing has expanded from solely being an EU platform (EU-TWIX) into a platform also being used in Africa, and has been recently been proposed to ASEAN for consideration.

7.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are derived from a range of sources including the research and analysis carried out for this digest, other publications, and expert opinion from wildlife trade specialists at TRAFFIC.

DEMAND REDUCTION

1. Demand reduction activities should focus on a specific behavior and audience to target in social and behavioral change efforts. Behavior change benchmarks, research evidence, and theories or frameworks of change, should also be used to underpin the approach. Consumer watchdogs and engagement platforms (e.g. members of Consumers International and similar bodies), could also be engaged in creative approaches to engaging consumers in the purchase of suitable alternatives.
2. Despite increased efforts to coordinate between NGOs and others implementing demand reduction activities in the target countries for the target taxa, this digest demonstrates that some gaps in knowledge, resources, and efforts remain. Examples include work around pangolin and tiger demand reduction in Cambodia and Lao PDR. Analyses by the World Bank demonstrate the relative lack of investment in demand reduction activities compared to other CWT strategies. Increased funding and actions across a number of priorities should therefore be made.
3. Systematic research should be undertaken to understand any dispersal of demand for elephant ivory, following China's domestic ban. Retailer and offender surveys may also be fruitful in providing insight to help understand shifting consumer and end-market trade dynamics.
4. Research to assess the impacts of demand reduction initiatives should employ more robust methods to ensure the veracity of self-reported data from buyers or user groups. Specifically, practitioners may need to move away from relying solely on consumer survey data and towards more robust methods such as randomized control trials.⁹⁹ Data arising through this

process should also be systematically contextualized against other measures of end-market trade flows and purchase levels.

LAW AND POLICIES

1. Update legislation in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Vietnam to include all CITES-listed species in national protection lists and ensure penalties are commensurate with the crime and act as a deterrent, and provide training and support for the courts to help facilitate appropriate sentencing.
2. Criminalize online advertisements and offers for the sale of protected wildlife species or products, through specific provisions in the law.
3. Prepare market analytics including wholesale and retail price details, in addition seizure data to assist in the identification of emerging trends or common problems facilitating illegal wildlife trade to inform policy and regulatory needs. In this digest seizures are presented in the absence of retail price data, a greater understanding of price data would complement wildlife seizure analyses and provide further insights into wildlife trade trends.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

1. Use existing national anti-money laundering and anti-corruption legislation to process wildlife trafficking cases as predicate offences by initiating financial investigations and recovery of the proceeds of crime. This includes preventing, identifying, and addressing corruption-related cases.
2. Conduct proactive, intelligence-led, and in-depth investigations, including the use of social network analysis, controlled deliveries, and financial investigations along the trafficking chains, and also restrict the availability of illegal wildlife on online commercial trade and social media platforms by working with online businesses, and associated transport/logistics companies to improve private sector risk reduction and accountability.
3. Improve detection rates of illegal shipments using equipment such as sniffer dogs and scanner machines, and where available use wildlife DNA forensic techniques to strengthen law enforcement, case preparation, and prosecutions. Improve capacity and resources around the use of relevant technology.
4. Ensure that tiger farm stocks are secured to prevent support sales or leakage of specimens/products into illegal trade through increased monitoring and regulation of these captive breeding facilities. Current facilities found to be conducting business illegally should be shut down.

REGIONAL COORDINATION

1. Encourage inter-governmental collaboration particularly at national levels with the establishment of platforms for multi-agency engagement, and at the regional level, e.g. the Trade in Wildlife Exchange (TWIX) approach in Europe and Africa, the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime and Working Group on Social Forestry, as well as China's engagement with its neighbors in Southeast Asia. And provide platforms that facilitate efficient sharing of intelligence and information.

2. Support regular multi-agency training opportunities with a mix of agencies beyond wildlife and environment officials, such as police, customs, border patrol, prosecutors, and private sector stakeholders such as airport and seaport security departments.
3. Increase collaboration between USAID-funded projects in the region for better coordination and improved joint impacts, to reduce duplication of effort and increase efficiencies of scale.

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